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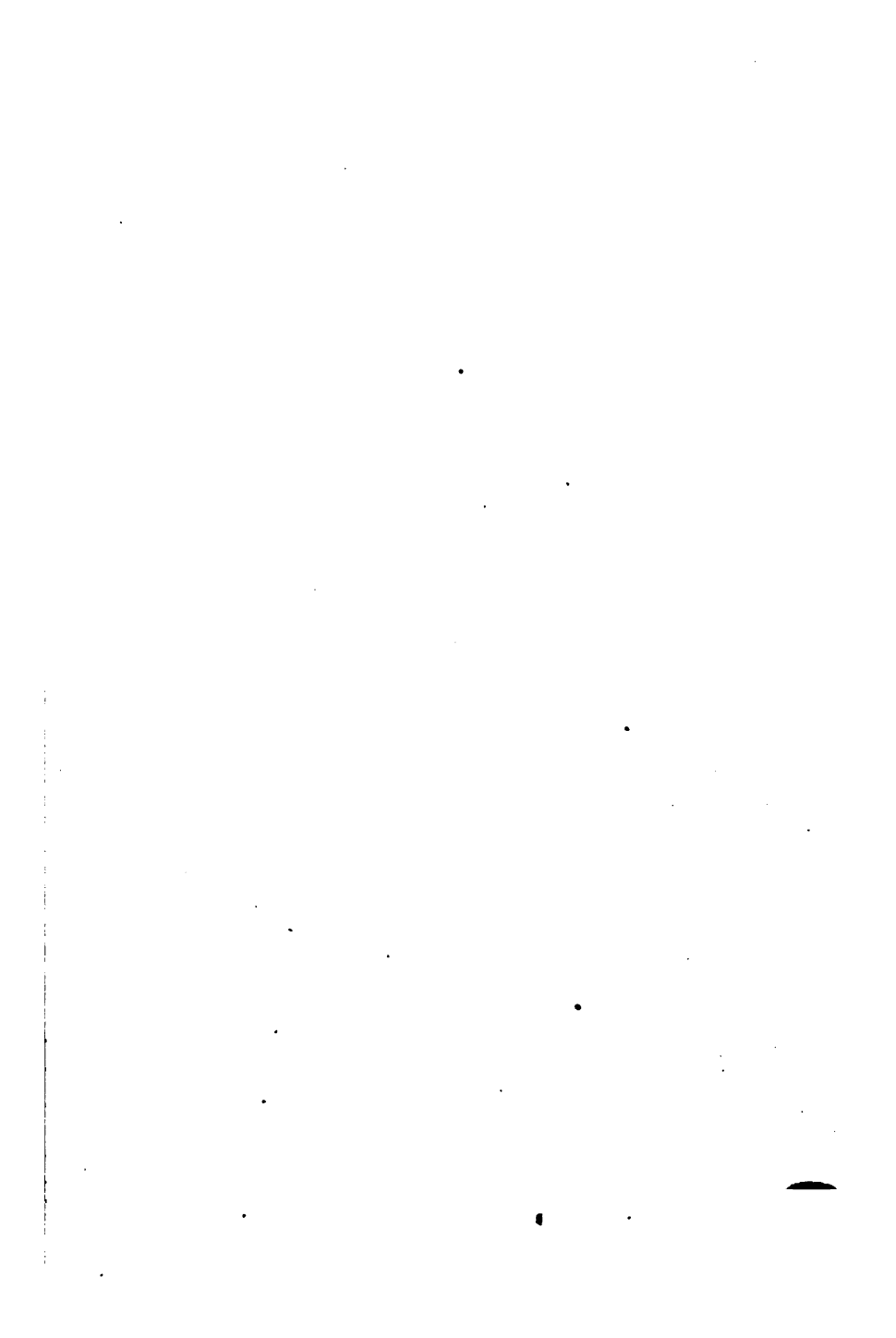
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# PERFECT ADONIS.

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PHILIP'S," "ROUNDHEARTS," "RICHARD  
VANDERMARCK," ETC.

Miriam Coles Harris



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## A PERFECT ADONIS.

## I.

**I**T was past one o'clock, and half-a-dozen people on the steps of the hotel piazza were looking at their watches, and saying that the stage was late. The coming of the stage was a luminous point in the day at Milford; even dinner waxed faint compared to it. The corner of the hotel commanded the street that brought the stage—a great broad street, with a sparse edging of trees, and little village shops and houses. The street on which the hotel stood was also broad and straight, with again, sparse trees and little houses, and shops and more hotels. Down the street by which the stage should come, a youngish lady with glasses, and a very near-sighted manner, looked intently, if not impatiently. She was the most prominent of the group on the piazza; in fact she was always that, in most groups. She was about twenty-five, not good-looking, pronounced, very pronounced. Her clothes were always handsome, but so carelessly put on as to be a little *outré* at the most favorable moments; she had generally a glory of hair-pins about her head, and shed gloves and handkerchiefs whenever she moved, and, in her near-sighted way, was always seen peering about for lost things, and receiving them back with an habitual and unmeaning “O, thank you.”

“For whom are you looking to-day, Miss Varian,” said

one of her neighbors on the piazza, a clever and hard working mother of two daughters.

"For whom am I looking? O, didn't I tell you?—I thought everybody knew about it—Mr. Hunt, I told you?"

"O, yes, indeed—that's why I'm here, Miss Varian. I'm risking my dinner you see," said a gentleman, very young, very tall, very *blasé*.

"But who?" said the mother of the daughters, much aroused.

"The prettiest creature," said Miss Varian; "Dorla St. John."

"I never heard of her," said the mother briefly.

"No, I suppose not. She's never been in society. She is an orphan, has not had anybody to take her out, nobody belonging to her but an oaf of a brother, who is only in the way, no good to anybody; not a very reputable fellow, I'm afraid. She doesn't know many people. Besides, she's pious."

This, Miss Varian said with simplicity, as if she had been naming her nationality or her parentage. Mr. Hunt thought it funny, and laughed; when she turned on him rather sharply.

"I don't like her any the less for it," she said. "I like people to carry out an idea, to be something, even if it is only pious. Dear devout thing; I'm not sure but that's what I fancy her for more than anything. I like people who own a title; who have pre-empted some adjective. She is the only pretty young woman I know who has the right to *this*."

"Is she so very pretty?" said one of the two daughters, creeping up, interested, to join in the conversation.

"You shall soon see for yourself; she is so fresh, so new to things. I mean to do everything for her. She anticipates so much pleasure."

"Poor thing, I'm sorry for her," said Mrs. Whymple, the



mother of the two. "Such a dull place, and such a dull season."

"O, I don't know about that," returned her companion. "Fine weather, no end of excursions, and ever so many nice people coming next month."

"Well, if she isn't used to much, this may amuse her."

"I don't know," said Miss Varian, sharply. "I'm used to a good deal, and it amuses me."

This, nobody could dispute; Miss Varian was used to a good deal, and her opinion had weight. Very few young women had had more amusement, and very few pursued it more deliberately. A great deal of money, an easy, good-natured mother, a temperament favorable to enjoyment, capital health, a social surrounding of the best;—the worst that could be said about her was that she was fond of change, that she took people up violently, and dropped them unceremoniously, that she only cared to be amused, and that she was unconventional, a little meddlesome, and a good deal self-willed.

At this point in the conversation, her mother came lumbering up the road from the cottage where they lodged, with a double-column novel under her arm, and an umbrella over her head.

"Dinner's late," she said.

"And the stage too," said her daughter.

"O, I forgot. Your protégée is coming to-day."

"O, Mrs. Varian," exclaimed the languid Miss Whymple, bringing her a chair, "tell me, *is* she so *very* pretty."

"Pretty, well, I don't know. Yes. I think you'd call her pretty."

"O, what a different story!" cried the young lady with delight. "Your daughter told us she was lovelier than any creature we had ever seen."

"O, my dear, you must learn to take Harriet *cum grano salis*. So many swans; I've got used to them."

"Now, Mamma, that's too bad. You know you said yourself she was a beauty."

"Did I? Well then, I have no doubt she is, or I thought her so then, at least."

"There's the stage," exclaimed the tall youth, Mr. Hunt. "Now let us take our salt." And he put his eyeglass to his eye. Harriet dropped hers and ran forward. The stage, in a cloud of dust, rattled up rapidly; a moment's pause at the post-office across the way, to throw out the mail, and then the four horses drew up before the door of the hotel.

"My dear, where are you, inside or out," cried Harriet, in near-sighted blindness, springing on the steps to look inside, and then flying forward among the little crowd of porters and loungers who had come out, to command a good view of the top.

There were a great many people inside the stage, and a great many outside, and a great deal of baggage, but among the *mélée* of people and things, nobody on the piazza had any difficulty in recognizing the pretty *débutante*. She had the fatal gift undoubtedly; what with height and grace, and a lovely freshness of complexion, she justified her memorialist's description. She was shy too, a lovely piquante shyness, that sometimes seemed a sort of fear, sometimes only a glimmering, laughing doubt how to please and what to say. It was rather an ordeal, to get down from the stage-top before all those people; and her friend and admirer always had the effect of embarrassing her, with her enthusiastic welcomes and embraces. Mamma Varian gave her a good-natured kiss, and then Harriet led her across the way to the cottage, and took her to her room.

Being excused from dinner that day, and a cup of tea ordered by the maid, Dorla was left alone, and shut herself into her little room, with a sensation of relief. As sensitive people generally are, she was tired by the journey and the arrival, and had an excited headache. She was wretchedly diffident, and felt out of place, and very much afraid, more

of her friends even than of the strangers she was to meet. She was so much younger than Harriet, that she naturally would never have approached her; but she had been elected to the post of favorite, and had no choice but to occupy it. The life she led at home was so dull, this was stepping into another world. Without a mother since her fourteenth year, with no memory of her father, and with a brother who was a bitter disgrace to her, and never a companion, she led a singularly restricted life in the midst of a gay city. Her brother was five years older; and his disappointing course had given her, almost in childhood, an unnatural sadness. Her world had contained three people, Mamma, Harry and herself. Poor little child; at fifteen it seemed to her that one-third of the world was silent, senseless and cold, gone some strange whither, one-third reckless and horrible, and the other third amazed and left alone. That is the way things looked to her when she was very young. She was very young still, but she was beginning to acknowledge to herself, there were people in the world whom she had not taken into her account, at fifteen. Harriet, for instance, and all her set of rollicking, merry, pleasure-seeking friends. They were going to do her a great deal of good, no doubt, in setting her right about the smallness of her own experiences, and the extent and variety of human nature, but all the same, they were very foreign to her, and very disagreeable at times.

About three o'clock, Harriet, not having any nerves, and never feeling tired, came back and seated herself in the chair by the window, and proceeded to entertain her guest.

"Now, I suppose you want to know what sort of a time you're going to have, my dear? Well, in the first place you're going to fall in love with the place. Don't you think it's charming and picturesque?"

"Why, no; not exactly. The drive from the railroad is very nice, but I am afraid I think the village is rather forlorn; *don't* you?"

"Oh, the village, the hotels and all that. Yes, quite forlorn, but the drives, the country; you could not ask anything lovelier?"

"Oh, I am sure I shall like it."

"And the people?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I am a little bit afraid of them, I think."

"Oh, you needn't be; I'll take care of you. They're all ready to tear you to pieces because you're such a beauty."

"Now you promised never—"

"But I don't mean they shall hurt you. I think it is exciting, and you are my great card this summer. With you I mean to punish the Whymples, and put the Duncans down. I shall make you a second Attila, a scourge. It will right the wrongs of years. My child, you must do exactly as I tell you, and we will carry Milford. I don't see why we shouldn't. With the carriage, and you, and Jack Cullen coming next week, I don't see what can stop us."

"What's the carriage to do with it? and what have I?" said Dorla, "and who is Jack Cullen?"

"I'll tell you what the carriage has to do with it. You don't know Milford. It's a place where people come when they don't want an expensive summer. It's just a little village overflowed by summer people, primitive and half alive; not an indigenous swell, nor a pair of fine horses, nor any style but what people bring; and as I said, people come for an economical summer, and don't bring their maids or their horses, and there are not four private carriages here; that gives ours weight. Then we have a parlor, and can leave people out if they don't do as we direct. And you, oh, you are no end of a card. You see there are so many prettyish girls here, but none that are new, none that amount to anything for a sensation. You've seen them all winter in silks and serges, and now you see them all summer in grenadines and muslins. The same dogs with different collars. Positively I should think the men would de-

test the sight of them ; I know I do. And no force, no originality ; just prettyish, fastish, stylish ; that's the best you can say of any of them. Now you, you know, are something in your own way ; a sort of an idea walking about among vacancies, and I hope of all things you won't lose this ; we must try to carry it out. I want you to look *dé-vote* whenever you're not in evening dress. You must wear white a good deal, and beads and a cross."

"Harriet, don't talk in that way. I don't think it is right."

"O, well, of course. No matter. Then about Jack. He is a great favorite, and good looking, and besides he brings his horse. He stays with us, and don't you see? he is very important."

"I see."

"There are not many men, that's the worst of it. I don't want to have you anticipate more pleasure than you'll get, you know."

"Oh, pray don't think about *that*. I assure you I like it better without. Just quiet country days, and excursions in the woods. You told me there were lovely woods."

"Oh, lovely ! But then we want something besides that. I'll arrange it all. Let me tell you about the men." Dorla winced. "The men" sounded so hideously to her. She wondered if Harriet would call them so, if she had seen some of them—Harry's companions—as she had, in some horrid and never-to-be-forgotten encounters.

"Let me tell you about the men. There is first, the creature whom you saw on the piazza, Dalton Hunt ; there is no telling what he may be when he is of age. He has a little sense, but is so spoiled here we can't guess what he might have been ; a loafing, lounging fellow, with a pipe and a hammock, and a blue veil tied round his hat. Two or three girls always devoted to him. Then there's Guymard, a handsome young widower, clever, well-mannered, but no more feeling than so much gutta-percha. You must never

look for anything from him. He is ambitious, and means to have his good time, and be somebody of importance when he marries for the second time. Then there are two old bachelors whom I despise. Dull old creatures. But we must not be particular. And—well—really I believe that's all there are; at least, all that are here for the summer."

"Oh, Harriet! I'm sure they're quite enough. Do let the Whymples have them, and let us try the woods."

"Oh, now, my dear, don't you go to being sentimental and shy, and spoil it all. It's all very well to look so; that you can't help, but I know you have a spice of sin and originality in you, that you haven't yet quite prayed away.

*Voilà!* It shall be my business to bring it out and whet it up. There, now, I'll go, for I see you look wretched and want to start for home the next train. I'll leave you with your good little books, and not come back till tea-time. Heigho! How many of them have you brought? My dear, do you have to pray out of all these every day? Little red edges and little crosses; what a family likeness between them all. What's this one that you've taken to bed with you? Litanies, what a lot of them, intercessions, preparations, daily devotions; it's all Greek to me. Ah, I'm right, 'from eastern sources.' So it has been Greek, whatever it is now. There! I won't bother you any more. Put the Greek away and go to sleep. Good-bye."

Harriet presently put her head back in the door to tell Dorla not to dress that evening.

"For," she said, "we'll take a drive quietly by ourselves at six, and Rosa shall make us a cup of tea over here when we get back, and I won't take you to the hotel till to-morrow. Somehow you don't look quite as well as usual, to-day. I suppose it's the sun, and riding on top of the stage; and I shan't take you over till you get your complexion back, if you have to stay in the cottage for a week. Rosa will get you some sour cream, if the flush don't go off before bed-time. Bye-bye."

"She'll kill me!" cried poor Dorla, throwing herself back on the bed, as the door finally closed across the passage. And she nearly cried, bending the little "good book" almost double in her hands. She was stung all over, and smarting with minute pains. She was shy, proud, sensitive, conscientious, and here she was patronized, paraded, probed; and her best unspoken feelings profanely made up into the common talk. "I ought not to have come," she said. "The only safe place for me is where I don't see anybody. If she says another word about my skin I will go home. It's bad enough to care about my looks myself, without having people talk about them in this coarse way." And she applied herself to her little book, to drive the monstrous thoughts away. Poor child. This she called temptation. She had not gone very far in her matter yet.



WEEK had passed, and this is the way things stood. Harriet was satisfied, Dorla was dazzled, and frightened, and uncertainly pleased. She had come from something duller than a nun's life, and she was in the midst of a little world of excitements, frivolities and strifes, of which she was the centre figure. A score or so of idle women, and a dozen or two of idle men, talked of her, and looked at her, and schemed about her all day long. Thanks to Harriet's abilities as stage manager, she was a success, a sensation. The people looked at her from the little hotel piazzas as she drove past in Mrs. Varian's fine open carriage, or as she walked through the village with Harriet and two or three of the few gentlemen who were in the place. They speculated upon the chances of her going to the Bluff in the evening, or to the Glen in the morning. It was something to be introduced to her, for Harriet kept her very close, and would not let her

be profanely known. She made it a point never to spend an evening at the hotels but on occasions of hops and special entertainments. Then she took Dorla in full dress, and looking her best, and went rather late, and there was always a hush and a murmur when they came into the room, in the rear of the good-natured mamma, and attended by two or three favored gentlemen. The other evenings they spent in the parlor or porch of their little cottage, with a few people invited; they ate indifferent ice-cream from the old Frenchman's across the street, they compounded strange drinks, they improvised suppers with cold chicken, and sardines, and Albert biscuit. Spoons were short, and glasses had often to be washed, but it was convivial, unconventional.

"C was the company highly delighted  
Who came to the feast upon being invited."

Happy they who had the entrée to the shabby little parlor; happy they who could say, nonchalantly, "at the Varians' cottage the other night;" happy they who could familiarly lift the latch of the crazy little gate, and sit down in the mouldy little porch if they found nobody at home. How much of this was owing to Dorla's attractions, and how much to Harriet's abilities, it would be difficult to say.

Dorla certainly had great beauty, and dressed herself very well; this was one of her gifts. She was very fresh, and, with all her piety, sufficiently piquant. For that spice of sin and originality, on which Harriet had congratulated herself, contributed a good deal to her success. Her little flashes of sarcasm and of temper, and her sad little repentances, were fascinating. Everything she did was pretty and unusual. Then she had around her some of the *entourage* of style, and high life, and fashion, albeit in a rickety little cottage at Milford. A maid followed her about with shawls and shades, and a man in livery delivered her little notes.



When she drove it was in a broad, luxurious carriage, with horses that stepped high and shook their glittering harness, not in a rumbling, ludicrous old hack, such as the other pretty girls in Milford had to drive in, with horses that haunted the imagination sorrowfully.

Then, as to Harriet's share in the success. She was naturally clever, and had seen a good deal of life. She was not jealous of Dorla's good looks, for she had none of that meanness of disposition. What she liked was "a good time," and power, and plenty of people about her ready to acknowledge her importance. She understood character superficially, but well enough to make her full of clever devices. Nothing pleased her better than to be putting somebody through a summer or a winter, as she was now doing for Dorla. It gave her an aim and an occupation, which things she needed very much. She thought she was doing a great deal of good, and was accordingly complacent. Her creed was humanitarian. Like a great many of the benefactors of the human family who do not consult heaven, she did considerable mischief. "I don't mind exerting myself," she said, "to give this poor child a little pleasure." And so she fastened upon her a sorrow that might be lifelong. "It is a shame to see that pretty creature shut up in a dull prison in the city," she said, while she was officiously forging for her the links that entered into her soul. It made it a little better that she did it unconsciously: but it is bitter to take a wound even from a careless hand. \* \* \*

Among the men who surrounded them, there was not one who put Dorla's heart in any danger. Indeed they were only society men, loafing away their summer, and were glad to be amused, and even ready to fall in love a little. Dorla's heart fluttered at each new name, but subsided into a very dull and monotonous beat after a little moment of acquaintance.

"They bore me terribly, Harriet," she said, in confidence. "Can't we do without them?"

This was treason, and ingratitude, and Harriet was very angry.

Dorla did not say anything about it any more, but learned to be rather amused by them, and faintly coquettish (rather faintly), and quite eager at times that they should not go over to the enemy. The enemy meant the two Whymples, and a pretty blonde from Philadelphia, and several commonplace and envious young women whom she hardly knew. Dorla became a little blood-thirsty, witnessing so many battles raged around her; she entered into the spirit of the conflict sometimes with an energy that surprised herself, afterwards she was very much ashamed; all the same, she was injured a little by it, as everybody must be by this semi-watering-place life, in which every man's or rather every woman's hand is against her neighbor, and tongues have utter license, and the business of every hour is only to get rid of it.

One day they were sitting in the Glen together, Dorla and her patroness. It was quite a rare thing for them to be alone together, they always had some followers. That morning they had sent away their followers to see about wagons for a picnic, and Dorla was trying to read to Harriet, who was trying to embroider. The Glen was cool and shady, the stream at their feet ran dark and deep under the pines.

"Somehow I don't care for reading," said Dorla, listlessly laying down the book. She had laid it down a dozen times that morning, when Harriet had interrupted her to talk about the little hostilities and rivalries of the hotels. "I really think, Harriet, it belittles one very much to live the sort of life we're leading. I begin to feel as if there were not anything in the world of greater interest than the success of the picnic to-morrow, or more majestic than putting down the Whymples."

"Oh, my dear," said, Harriet impatiently, tangling her silk in her disapprobation, "don't begin to moralize. That's

just like Felix, he's always proving the littleness of things to me. For my part I mean to think the thing I'm doing is the most important occurrence of the century, and nobody shall disillusionize me."

Felix was Harriet's only brother, two years her senior, a handsome young lordling of twenty-seven, with so much money and so much leisure, and so much good looks, as to be greatly bored. He had been for several years in Europe, and did not talk of coming home. In fact, the easy mamma and the busy sister were, each in their way, apt to put him out of humor. Of course, though, they were fond of him in their own way, and Harriet talked of him *ad nauseum*, some of her companions thought. Dorla always was an interested listener; she longed to see this prince among men; she kept his picture in her writing desk, and made Harriet read all his letters to her. She had made up a little romance to herself about this brother, and had more interest in him than in all the people round her. When Harriet introduced his name on this occasion, her listless manner vanished, and she said:

"Well if he doesn't find watering-place life good for his soul's health, I'm sure I should agree with him."

"Oh, yes, I'm sure you and he would suit each other *à merveille*. But mind you, he isn't any saint, on the contrary, a quiet young sinner, to the best of my belief; so quiet that you'd probably never find it out, however. But in your aesthetics, your nonsense about the woods, and all that sort of thing, your horror of noisy people, you would agree exactly. I think I'll keep Felix for you, you're just his style and just the coloring to suit his eye."

"Ah, thank you! It's so probable he will be kept; it is more than likely that he is engaged to be married at this very moment." (This was to be assured for the great many-th time that there wasn't a possibility of such a thing occurring, that the only danger was he would not ever marry.)

"Well," with a laugh, "that doesn't make it any better for me; what's the use in talking about him to me if he isn't ever going to marry?"

"Oh, but when he sees you he'll change his mind entirely. He delights in hair of just your shade of brown."

"Well, that must be because it is so like his own."

"His own! Why, his is light. How often must I tell you."

"It's dark in his picture, I am sure."

"Why, here," said Harriet, taking from her dress a locket, "here it is. Do you call that dark or light?" Dorla bent over it. The locket was a curious old fashioned thing, two large clear ovals of crystal, bound in reddish gold. Pressed between them there was a single yellow curl. The locket was fastened to a gold chain, thin and fine.

"What a quaint, old locket," she cried taking it in her hand.

"Yes, but the hair; I suppose you call *that* yellow, do you not?"

"Why, I believe I must. But no doubt it was cut off when he was a little child."

"The day before he went away to college. It may be a shade or two darker now, but still it's unquestionably light."

"Harriet, I think I like yellow-haired men."

"You do? Well, there is Mr. Oliver, he will be glad to know it."

"I did not say mouse color. Come let me wear this locket, it is so very odd I like it."

She did not wait for permission, but clasped the thin chain round her throat, and cast admiring looks down on the locket.

"Very well," said Harriet, "you shall wear it till Felix comes home, or till you hear he has a wife."

"Agreed," said Dorla.

And then Mr. Oliver, of the mouse colored hair, came down the path to join them, and Dorla tried to be inter-

ested in the programme for the picnic, and was very gentle and polite, but rather absent-minded, as she let him carry her shawl and book, and give her his arm across the bridge and up the steep path to the village street. He was an elderly, estimable young man, but very unexciting.

**A**BOUT the middle of August, however, a crisis came in the smooth successes of the Varian faction; a certain pretty Mrs. Seymour arrived, accompanied by wagon loads of cribs, mattresses, bath tubs, perambulators and nursery appliances. No one could apprehend social rivalry from such a source. Five children under seven years ought to be enough to occupy the time of even a pretty woman who has been a belle. Everybody took to her, she was naive, she was popular, she talked to everybody *à cœur ouverte*; she dealt sweetness right and left. She took counsel of the old ladies about household grievances; she talked by the hour to the young mothers about farina, and barley flour, and rational food for infants. She sighed a little with the young girls about her past successes, as if they were things of the dim, dim past. The men she coddled; asking them over to her cottage, and making them nice things in a silver porringer over a little lamp if they were not well, making them very comfortable in her easy chairs, and being devoted to the smell of smoke; getting them to talk a great deal about themselves, and being very sympathetic.

Every one was sorry for her; it was so hard for such a delicate woman to have such a host of children, and such sickly children too. According to her story they had the croup, some of them, every night, but she was the heroine of all her little narratives, and you thought a great deal more about her suffering than the children's. She resolved at

these frequently recurring crises to telegraph for the Major, and then heroically resolved not. These things were talked about a great deal. This went on for two or three weeks ; everybody was running about on her little errands, and running to see how the sickest baby was. After these harrowing nights, people sent for her to drive, (and she always went). They begged her to come up to the hotel for a little relaxation in the evenings (and she always came). They brought her novels to divert her mind with, (and she always read them).

It began to dawn on people's minds after a month of this, that Mrs. Seymour's cares did not sit heavy on her, much as she talked about them ; that croup and cholera-infantum had never yet interfered with any of her plans of pleasure ; that her cottage, overflowing with babies and nurses as it was, was beginning to be the most popular cottage in the place. All the gentlemen gravitated to it fatally for their after-dinner smokes and for their after-supper chats ; and a few young women, with disinterested tenderness, were always to be found there, to lighten the burden of her heavy cares. The old ladies were not quite so enthusiastic as at first, and the young mothers felt they had been swindled.

Harriet Varian was angry,—no words can tell how angry.

"That fraud, Dorla, that fraud. She and her everlasting babies have been a corps of sappers and miners, and have nearly done the work for us. Why absolutely, if I hadn't drummed up Oliver last night, we should not have had a soul to speak to all the evening, Rosa says there were twenty people there last night, and they didn't go away till half-past twelve at least. And they are actually going to have a dance to-night, and a supper at Fauchère's. Of course they've left us out, for I haven't spoken to her for a week. But all the men are going, and we are in a pretty fix. She has even roped in Oliver, though I know he doesn't want to go. We might as well give up ! And it has all been sprung upon us," Harriet was particularly bitter,

for she had been one of the most enthusiastic admirers of Mrs. Seymour on her first arrival.

"There is just this about it," she said with emphasis. "We must do something for this evening, or we are beaten off the field. Where shall we go? What shall we do?"

"We can't have anything very general, can we?" said Dorla, with a little laugh. "Considering we have snubbed all the ladies, and the gentlemen have all snubbed us."

Harriet knit her brows. This was too serious for light words. Again she said, "if I can't get up something for to-night, I will go home to-morrow."

Then Dorla knew she must not laugh any more, but must apply her mind to business. "I have it," exclaimed Harriet at last, dashing her glasses away from her eyes, and springing up. "I have it, Dorla; your portfolio." Dorla brought it, begging to know what she had got.

"I want you to write a note," she said, "at once, to that young Rothermel, who was so taken with you, at the Falls the other day, and invite him to go with us to take tea at the Brewery to-night."

"I won't do anything of the sort," said Dorla, flushing, and speaking with unusual promptness.

"You must, you shall," exclaimed Harriet with vehemence. "Your foolish prudery will spoil everything. You expect everything to come to you and you not move a finger. If all girls did as you do, I'm afraid there would not be much animation in society. Dorla, you've got to write this note for me."

"You needn't ask me."

"I think this is a pretty return for all I've done for you this summer."

"Harriet, I know you have been everything that's kind—but—"

"But you won't do the first thing that I ask you to."

"Harriet, I *can't* do such a thing as that. It would be positively indecent. I haven't spoken to him more than twice."

"No, but you know he's very much in love with you."

"So much the worse."

"Simpleton! How! He'll think everything you do is right, and will be in a seventh heaven. Besides, you'll probably never see him after you go away from here, and never hear his name, and if there were anything improper in it (which there isn't), nobody'll ever be the wiser, for *he* won't talk about it; he is far too shy, and we needn't say anything if we do not choose. He's just a country fellow, I know that, but he is very handsome, and has niceish sort of manners for a person brought up here, and the Whymples and the rest of them would have been very glad to get hold of him, but he wouldn't take any notice of their overtures. You know they made a great point of getting him for the tableaux, but he refused point blank."

"Maybe he'd refuse us point blank," said Dorla, looking down.

"O, no danger," returned Harriet. "You know yourself how he has been hanging round the hotel ever since your little adventure with him at the Falls. Before that, you know he hardly ever came here, and we only saw him driving past, or at his office, and once or twice at church."

Dorla knew that perfectly well, and a good deal more. She knew how the handsome young fellow, semi-farmer, semi-lawyer, had haunted her steps, since that little adventure that had made them acquainted. How honest and real his admiration was, and how much more she enjoyed it, than the insipid compliments of the men about her. This had really been a little romance to her, of which she had not talked to Harriet, of course. She thought of the way in which he had colored and been agitated, when she had met him at the steps of the little law office in the village, and had spoken to him, and then fancied how any one could dare to ask of her the enormity of sending him a note.

"I'll do anything else for you Harriet, but I won't do that."



"Dorla, I think you are as ungrateful as you are prudish. Any other girl would do it."

"Get some other girl to do it then."

"I wish from my heart I had some other girl to ask, and that I hadn't turned everybody out for you. This will be the end of everything. If I don't succeed in getting up this party, you may bid good-bye to Milford, for I'll pack my trunks to-morrow. Think, Dorla, what a nice plan this will be. I've made it all out. It will just upset the Seymour's supper, and give us the *éclat* of an exclusive, charming little expedition. In the first place, I shall *make* Jack Cullen break with them, and go with us. I think he's rather taken with the little humbug, but he knows too much to make me angry; our house in town is something to him; he will not dare say no. Then, there is Oliver. I think he'd rather go with us, it only needs a word to make him come. I'm sure of him. There are three men. Then Mr. and Mrs. Bishop, jolly, clever people—and the Davises, who are always trumps. Then you see it's lovely moonlight. We can drive round the Ramonskill, to the Brewery, take our tea there about nine o'clock, and come home by moonlight. You know the Brewery is such a queer old place, and the teas there used to be quite famous. Nobody has been there this year—it's quite a novelty, ever so much better than a supper at Fauchère's, where everybody goes at least every week. We'll take some champagne with us, and Oliver shall carry his guitar and sing, and altogether it will be successful. It is no end of a lark. Dorla, how can you be so obstinate?"

"I am not obstinate about anything but the note, ask the other people—"

"I won't stir without three men. I will not go unless there are enough to make it look convivial. A miserable scraped-together party, with two or three sticks, married men, and a brand or two snatched from the rival fire. No, unless we have something fresh and noticeable, we are better

off at home, creeping to bed at nine o'clock without lighting the parlor lamp. I should think you'd have a little pride, my dear. After the fuss people have made about you, it isn't pleasant to see you snuffed out in this manner."

"Of course it isn't pleasant," said Dorla, between a pout and a laugh. "It only shows it was a fictitious market: the inflation was owing to you altogether."

"Not altogether," cried Harriet, "but to be frank, it was not *all* your eyes and hair. All I ask is that you help me out of this. If you will, I'll never be deceived by any one again! The more babies a woman has, the more I will distrust her. Nothing but grandchildren will put me off my guard."

"The Seymour would flirt if she had the second generation on her knees."

"Nobody would flirt with her. She would not harm us then. But now, to block her game. Dorla, here's your paper; write the little note. John won't have more than time to take it, and do all my errands."

"Harriet, there isn't the smallest use in asking me."

"Now tell me in plain English, *why* you are so obstinate. *What* harm is there in asking a man to join a party, in which there are at least two matrons, and in which everybody is older than yourself? Come, why can't you do it? Your first reason?"

"Because I don't know him, and because I don't like to."

"Well, the next?"

"Because he isn't exactly in our sort of life and mightn't know how to take it, and because— O, Harriet, well, if you must make me say it, I am afraid, that is, I think he thinks he likes me, and might be unhappy about it, when he found out we were only making use of him. He isn't the sort of man to laugh at, Harriet, he isn't used to our ways of doing things. You had better let him drop, and think of somebody else to butcher for your Roman holiday."

Miss Varian left the room at this in a great pet. She

renounced Dorla and her interests for the space of half an hour; she even pulled a trunk out and sent for Rosa to come and do her packing. But before Rosa could arrive she had come to a wiser resolution. She did not know where to go if she went from Milford, and there was nothing better than to reconquer Milford, and begin the campaign *da capo*. As to Dorla's scruples, there was more than one way of getting around an obstacle. She would write the note herself in Dorla's name. She had a right to do it, she had done so much for her; and then, when it came out, she would laugh and tell her all about it. Really there was nothing in it. It was making a mountain out of nothing. She despised herself for giving herself so much trouble. This was the solution she should have arrived at, at the first. So she pulled out of the portfolio, which in her temper and haste she had kept in her hand when she left the other room, a sheet of pearl colored note paper, with Dorla's initials in lilac on it, and she wrote: "Miss St. John will be very glad if Mr. Rothermel will join Mrs. Varian's party to the Brewery to-night. At seven o'clock the ladies will be ready, if Mr. Rothermel will meet them in the parlor of the cottage."

Then Harriet's spirits rose. This was quite to her taste. It was conquering adverse fortune. She scrawled off two other little notes, sent Rosa to lay in wait for Mr. Cullen, and marched forth to reduce Oliver in person. That was very easily accomplished. He was quite soft-hearted about Dorla, and she forged a sweet little message from her, and he was soon flying about, sending orders to the Brewery and putting things *en train*. Jack Cullen was not so easy to subdue. He was quite captivated by Mrs. Seymour, and was moreover deeply implicated in the supper party, was the head and front of it, in fact, under her direction. How to make him break through all this was Harriet's difficulty; for she foresaw cheerfully it would be a permanent break. Amiable as the lady was, she would never overlook a slight like that. Jack

would never again smoke his after-dinner meerschaum in the shade of that catalpa, if Harriet carried her point to-day. And she did carry it. Jack was a society man. He dared not put the Varians against him. He owed them a good deal, and (what was more to the point) he expected to owe them a great deal more. He basely forswore the supper party, and with a gloomy front marshalled himself again in the Varian following.

At half-past six, when Dorla came down into the parlor, a little late, she found everybody there. And more than everybody. When she saw young Rothermel, she gave a little start and colored. He was not too much embarrassed to notice her blush. Harriet, looking a little flushed and excited too, managed to whisper to Dorla with a laugh, as she passed her, "you see I managed to get him without you after all."

Dorla was in a fever of curiosity to know "how," but there was no time and no opportunity for an explanation. The room was quite full of people, for, all massed, the party was respectable in numbers; Mrs. Varian and the two young ladies, the three gentlemen so hardly won, Mr. and Mrs. Bishop, and the three Davises, father, daughter and a son. The carriages were at the door. Into the Varian carriage, Harriet put Mrs. Varian, Mrs. Bishop, Mr. Davis and Oliver. Into the large open wagon, went the others. Dorla and the pretty Davis girl were on the back-seat; on the high seat of the driver Jack Cullen was put, as being a conspicuous place, and one not involving him in conversation. (His present condition of mind was not favorable to conversation.) The precious object of Harriet's scheming and forgery was also made prominent, as was the hamper of champagne.

Then, amid much laughing and merriment, some of it rather forced, they started from the house, the large wagon leading. Harriet insisted upon making the tour of the village. It was a lovely evening; the people were just coming

from tea, starting for their walk to the Bluff, or sitting about the piazzas. It is safe to say everybody in Milford saw them. And very nice and jolly they looked. A good many people doubtless envied them. They eclipsed the supper-party, now raging with the defection of its two best men; they delighted the popular eye. Admiration and envy followed them neck-and-neck as they swept out of the village, down the hill, towards the lovely river road. How very few but thought them happy and gay, and that all these pleasures had been tumbled in their lap by a generous and partial destiny. Not guessing at the rancor and envy and deceit that had underlaid the matter, and the little crime of forgery which was the corner stone of the construction. Several of the party felt very uncomfortable; all were rather silent, after they were fairly out of the village. Jack was in obstinate ill-humor, making very little effort to conceal his feelings. Oliver was dull and a little sentimental. Young Rothermel was constrained and awkward. Poor Dorla felt personally responsible for his behavior, and was miserable every time he opened his mouth, lest he should say something that the sharp-witted citizens by whom he was surrounded could turn into ridicule. She was much perplexed to know how he got there; nor could she understand a certain shade of difference in his manner, a slight decrease in diffidence, and a slight increase in ardor. When she was left beside him for one moment as they were getting out of the carriages at the Brewery, she was in great alarm lest he should tell her that he loved her on the spot. "Maybe they do so in the country," she thought, in terror, hurrying to get beside some one. His eyes said so much, so unaccountably much, for such a very limited acquaintance. Poor fellow, he was alarmingly, recklessly in love, and before the expedition was over, everybody knew it quite as well as Dorla did. The sudden elevation of hope that he owed to Harriet's fraud had brought his latent passion into full maturity. He was very young and very ignorant, as Dorla

had told Harriet, "of their ways of doing things." He was, as Harriet had predicted, in a seventh heaven; and the added influence of the moonlight, the champagne, the music, and the gay party, (for before the end of the evening, the party was gay), made him quite reckless who knew the state of his affections.

Sitting out on the piazza of the Brewery, after tea, Oliver sang some love songs, in a slender metallic voice. Such music was better than nothing, but not very good. The moonlight was lovely, and the air was balmy. The tea, or supper, also had been very good. The ladies sat on the piazza, the gentlemen leaned about the railing or sat on the steps. Jack, still morose, smoked his cigar a few rods down the path. After Oliver had sung all his little ditties, some one said, who else would sing? Harriet said, "Would not Mr. Rothermel?" He consented and took the guitar in his hand. Dorla was in an agony of apprehension, and made Harriet an imploring gesture, which Harriet scorned to notice, otherwise than by urging the singing upon him further. Dorla bent down her head as he began, and wished that she were deaf. She had seen the bright-eyed Davis girl was preparing to enjoy a little comedy. Even Jack drew near with a shade of interest, and Dorla saw Mrs. Bishop touch her husband's arm. This all seemed absolutely cruel; she was in a fever of mortification. This man, through her, was being made a fool of; a good honest fellow too, a better man perhaps than some of those who judged him. He was tolerably well educated (she had found that out already), having spent his four respectable years in a college-town, and having studied law after it with as much result as usual. What he lacked was what both colleges and law schools do not supply, to wit, good breeding. He used correct English when he spoke; she had never seen him do a flagrantly gauche thing. He seemed to have a general and consistent idea of good manners; yet she was always uncertain of him, and was always tingling with a sense of discord. But to-

night she had an agreeable surprise ; in a few moments after he began to sing, she ceased to wish that she were deaf, and presently raised her head, and gazed at him with reassurance. For he had a voice of great strength, and though uncultivated, quite remarkable for sweetness and expression. Every one was listening with pleasure. Evidently the study of elementary music had entered into the programme of the respectable four years, and the guitar had been regarded as part of a "liberal education." His songs were old-fashioned and only of one order, but they were just such as suited the hour and the surroundings. They were beatific, after Oliver's tinkling tenor. "When the swallows homeward fly," "Always of thee I'm fondly dreaming," "I'd offer thee this hand of mine"—seemed not a shade too romantic and tender for the hour and the occasion. There was so much reality and abandon in his singing, that everyone (but Jack) was touched. Sitting on the steps at Dorla's feet in that soft air and moonlight, it was easy to put expression into such songs as these. Dorla felt a warmth of pleasure and interest ; it is very pleasant to know a man not to be ashamed of has fallen in love with you.

There was a great deal of enthusiasm expressed for his songs. He was made to sing everything he had the smallest knowledge of ; to sing all the best songs over, and to be recommended to learn everybody's favorite, "which would just suit his voice." Harriet was secretly happy at finding him possessed of such an accomplishment, which rendered him so presentable, and she made out a plan for the new campaign, with his aid, in which Mrs. Seymour was to be routed horse, foot and dragoon. He was to make her little parties agreeable, he was to raise the falling mercury of Dorla's renown ; he was to be their slave. And much more useful and unique a slave than Oliver, or that "Spanish volunteer," poor Jack. Thinking of all this, Harriet could not be too thankful that she had written the little note.

"Didn't I tell you it would be no end of a lark," she

said to Dorla, at her chamber door that night, declining however to enter, and keeping Rosa by her to prevent confidential questioning.

"No end of a lark." Yes, verily: slang fulfilled a prophetic sense for once. It had no end, that lark, as poor Dorla found at last.

**T**HE lost ground was soon regained: Oliver and Rothermel were ready weapons, and poor Jack was always at their command, *faute de mieux*, to command him. For he could not go back, after that sad day, to the Seymour's care, and all the coddling he got, he go from the sharp-voiced Harriet. The Seymour's temper suffered by these reverses; she became less soft, less winning to the smokers of meerschaums. The tide of favor turned, wavered, and finally set strong towards the Varians. Their cottage was again the gathering point of all the gentlemen, the resort of the cleverest and nicest people. People talked about Dorla, as they did at first; admired her, criticised her, found fault with her, but made her very important. They tattled, they babbled, they grew childish, as only idle people can. What point of smallness would they not have reached, if the summer had been more than three months long.

The summer was now at its close, and pleasant as it had been, everybody was a little tired of it and glad to go away. People were tired of each other; intimacies were worn thin, and needed to be used with care. Harriet, for her part, felt that she required relaxation. She had worked hard that summer. Oliver thought change of scene might benefit his suit. Jack had done nothing but swear at Milford since his rupture with Mrs. Seymour; and as for Dorla, she longed eagerly to get away. She knew that going away was the end of gayety and



holiday for her; but she had become involved in a sort of life that filled her with dissatisfaction, and the only way out of it, was to get out of Milford. It seemed to be entirely without her consent that she was put in the position she occupied. She rebelled against all the worldly code of her set, and yet she went on obedient to it. But it must be remembered, she was very young, very humble, and a little timid. She could hardly stand up against so many people older than herself, and cleverer by reason of experience. But what troubled her most, was not the belittling of her mind and the blinding of her conscience, that threatened from such a sort of life, but the more positive and tangible perplexity of what to do about young Rothermel. Harriet had used him, had flattered him, had kept him about them, till the affair had grown into serious proportions. Dorla protested and avoided him, fled him, looked wretched whenever they were together; but that did not help the matter. Ever since that evil Brewery party, he had seemed to feel he had a right to be in love with her. He and Oliver were ragingly jealous of each other; that made a charming little play, which Harriet, the Bishops, and the Davises, never seemed to tire of assisting at. Dorla never ceased to be uncomfortable, and the admiration she received from others was quite lost upon her, for this annoyance. She did not mind Oliver; he seemed conventional and commonplace; she very much doubted whether he meant anything at all. But this young countryman; this was cruel, and she hated herself for being the instrument of his torture, though how it had come about, she was not sure at all. There was a mystery about it all. Surely she had not encouraged him enough to have made all this commotion. For everybody was talking about it (having little else to talk about), and even the people of the village were busy in the matter. Dorla simply longed to get away, and hailed with gratitude the day named for their going, when it came. She had been almost invisible for a day or two, and no "declarations" had been in

order. She was very womanly, if not very adroit, and neither of her lovers had half a minute's interview with her, from the time their going was decided on. She was Mrs. Varian's shadow, and never left her side when out of the cottage. When in it, she generally had a headache, and could not leave her room.

The morning of the departure proved bright and cool; a radiant September day. A large party was going. All Milford stood idle and gazing about the piazza steps to say or look good-bye—all Milford, that is, that was not going away in the stage. It was voted more of a lark to go on the top of the stage, than to go in the carriage. So Harriet and Dorla scrambled up to the topmost seat, with Jack and young Davis established at their feet. They were bright with gay cloaks and blue veils, and Harriet had a violent red plume in her hat, (which became the stage top more than it did her). Jack had his gun and fishing rods. There was Russia leather run mad, in every device of valise, bag, lunch-box, shawl strap. Altogether, they were a bright and pretty sight, and it looked like the very romance of a journey. Dorla, with a white "breast" in her hat, and a dark blue cloak wrapped around her, looked a little pale, but always pretty. Oliver she was watching furtively, keenly apprehending an interview at the depot. She knew his farewell on the steps had not been final. For the other, she was in perplexity. He had not been near them since the day before. Surely he did not mean a depot declaration also. She resolved to take young Davis' arm when they got down from the stage, and never to let it go till they were past the first station on the road to town (no matter what became of the baggage).

All this while, during the formation of this resolution and during this furtive watching, she was bending down like a gracious young princess, and saying good-bye to the people who stood below and who had come to see them off. At last! "Crack went the whip, round went the wheels, were

never folk so glad." Amid waved handkerchiefs, and scattered kisses, and renewed good-byes, the stage rolled out of the village.

During the drive to the depot, Dorla once grew a little quiet, and stopped talking half a moment, just half a moment, to young Davis. Her quick eye had caught sight of a figure, a man in sportsman's clothes, with a gun at his side, leaning against a tree, on a hill at their right, about quarter of a mile off from the highway. No one else saw him; it would have been difficult to say how she saw him, or how she recognized him at that distance but she knew instantly; it was Rothermel, "Poor little Rothermel." Though why she called him little was as mysterious; for he was honest five feet ten. The sudden sight gave her pain. This was so cruel, and so real, and so wrong. She wished she could forget all about it; no doubt she would when she got away from Milford. No doubt this was the last time she should ever see or hear of him.—Ah!—And with that certainty, she said softly to herself, "Good-bye, poor fellow. Forget all about this foolish summer; and I'll pray for you always for my penance. You'll be happy soon with somebody that you'll think a hundred times better than you think me now."

Oliver did not declare himself at the depot, for the same reason that he had not declared himself before. He did not get a chance. Dorla gave a deep sigh of relief as the cars started, and she felt as if she could at last rest upon her arms. The journey was not very different from other journeys of its length, notwithstanding the advantages it seemed to present in the matter of Russia leather and lunch. The cars were delayed a little, the afternoon of the brilliant September morning had become hot, and there was a good deal of dust. Harriet had a headache, and Mrs. Varian was very matter of fact.

When the city was reached, and they dropped Dorla at her door, it was without much demonstration of sentiment at

parting; Mrs. Varian seemed chiefly anxious to get home at the hour she had written for dinner, and Harriet was most concerned about a missing check which Jack had been left at the ferry to fight about. It seemed to Dorla as she went up the steps and rang the bell, alone (the carriage in the interests of dinner having driven on), a very tame and unexciting ending to her so exciting summer. As the servant opened the door, she smelled the smell of the old familiar soup which the cook would make four days in seven; one carrot, one turnip, an onion, two tops of celery, two pounds fresh lean beef; how she hated it. The house was darkish, nobody being expected. Harry she knew was "out of town." O, how dingy, and worn, and dull the parlors looked, as the woman lit the gas (with a horrid match that filled the air with sulphur). Whole weeks, and months, and years of seclusion, and worry, and monotony, defiled before her as she looked down those dim rooms. She wondered she had wanted to come away from Milford. Milford was paradise; and she had left paradise behind forever.

There were some bills lying on the dining-room mantel-piece; Harry always left the bills for her. There were no letters, no cards, nothing that looked young-lady-like and pleasant.

"I don't want any dinner," she said to the servant. "Just bring me some tea up to my room." Dorla spent the evening on the lounge in her own room alone (that was where she would spend a good many). O, Milford was very pleasant! And her holiday was over. There wouldn't be any sequel to it she foresaw, in the winter pleasures which Harriet could give, for Harriet was going on to Newport the next day. She would be there all the autumn, and be in Washington much of the winter. Moreover, Dorla felt, her days of intimacy with the Varians were over. Somehow they were all beginning to feel their dissimilarity, and Harriet had never been intimate with any one beyond one season. Dorla was kneeling before her open trunk (which

the expressman had banged down in the lower hall, and the women had dragged toilsomely up stairs), and was taking out, carefully and tenderly, the dresses and little toilet adornments of the now departed summer. They each had a little separate pathos to her. This was the sash that had got caught in the bushes at the Glen, and about which Oliver wrote the very even rhymes which she had put away carefully in her writing desk, lower down in the trunk. These were the gloves, and she sighed a little as she pulled out the fingers, that she had worn at the masque ball. Young Davis had carried them in his pocket for a day or two, and had shown some inclination not to give them up. What a nice evening that had been. And here was the skirt, the poor, dear old skirt, that she had worn to the Peak that glorious morning when the wind blew so, and the sky was so intensely blue. She could feel the strong breeze in her face, and the glow that went through her as she climbed the uneven path; here was the rent that she had made as she sprang over the great tree that lay across their way. Oliver had said a great many foolish things about it, and had given her pins to fasten it up, out of a little cushion he carried in his pocket that somebody had made for him "that liked him." O, who could. Dorla tried to fancy the kind of girl that would like Mr. Oliver and make pin-cushions for him. And here, crushed between two dresses was her pretty straw hat, with its faded ribbons; but it was bright with many pleasant memories, and she lifted it tenderly. Wreathed in it, were some ferns and leaves that Rothermel had picked for her one day at the Ramonskill. They were brittle and brown, and broke when she touched them; but they brought back the smell of the moss and the feeling of the light spray on her face, as they had stood under the wall of rock, and looked up at the fall above. O, the blessed, lovely woods and waters—the broad, free hill-tops and the summer wind! How she longed for them, as she felt herself pent once again in city bounds; as she smelled the close and stagnant air, and heard

the roar of city noises that came in through the wide opened window. She was kneeling before the trunk with the hat and its ferns in her hand, far away in a revery, when the door was pushed open, and the cook appeared; a gaunt, dark woman, whose unlovely temper showed itself upon her face. She had lived some years in the house, and was honest and sober and all that is detestable.

"So you're back, Miss Dorla," she said. Dorla said yes, and sighed a little to think that was the only welcoming word that had been spoken. She was prevented from trying to be amiable in her interest about the cook's health, by the woman's saying without preface, "And what's for breakfast. That's what I came about."

"O, I'm sure I don't know."

A shrug and silence.

"Anything; you know what is in the house. I don't care at all."

"That's the kind that's always hardest to be pleased."

"But you know I'm not that kind, I'm very easy to be pleased."

"All the same, I'd like you to say what I'm to make you for your breakfast."

"O, well, I don't know; I think I should like some oysters, perhaps."

"It's nearly ten o'clock, and the shops are likely shut."

"O, then don't think of it. A chop—"

"We haven't an ounce of fresh meat in the house."

"Well, some cold beef—anything cold you have."

"The last of the mutton was used up for dinner yesterday. We do mostly without meat when we're all alone."

"Why, then you can make me an omelette. Your omelettes are always nice."

"There isn't an egg down stairs. I haven't sent to the grocer's for a week."

"Then Amanda, it's very evident, I shan't have much for breakfast."

"That's just what I was saying, you'd be certain to complain."

"Well, I can't complain now, because I know what to expect. If you give me a cup of coffee and a roll I shall not be dissatisfied."

"The coffee has been out this week or more; and Sarah drinks tea and I just take what's made. I don't have things put out much for *me*."

"Why didn't you order coffee. You know you have liberty to order what is necessary."

"Liberty. O yes; I know all about my liberty. Perhaps if you had some cooks you mightn't say that to them. But you're quite safe in saying it to me. I'd like you to look over the books, and see if they are all correct."

"I am perfectly sure the books are all right, before I look at them. If I didn't trust you, I shouldn't leave you here."

"You needn't be too certain. There's the ice-man says—"

"O, Amanda, wait till to-morrow. I'll look everything over in the morning. I am really tired to-night."

Amanda made a sound that conveyed ineffable contempt, and turned back to the breakfast. There wasn't any roll, and the French baker had stopped coming since Mr. Harry had been gone.

"Then I will eat a cracker—I brought some home in my bag—and drink a glass of water, if you haven't any coffee. But I don't want to hear another word about it."


And then the sour creature had to go away, for she never dared go further than this with her young mistress (it surely was far enough to go). She was an American, and like all capable American servants, very disagreeable. She resented her position always, at all moments of her life, and she saw not the least propriety in any one being

better off than she was herself. She rather liked the dissipated, villainous Harry, but for the pretty young Dorla she had no pity. She would have liked to put her at the wash-tub, and have seen her make the fires. Notwithstanding, she was trusty and frugal, taking a pride in starving herself in summer, and making the other woman live on scraps, saving and saving, quarrelling over every bill, and making the house unbearable to every servant who came in it. The kitchen life was so grim and dull through her peculiarities, that constant changes were being made; no one stayed six months.

Housekeeping cares are naturally irksome to girls of Dorla's age, but everything was so unfavorable to her, it was no wonder she felt overwhelmed with this sudden resumption of them. She threw herself down, with the straw-hat still in her hands, and cried bitterly, after her tormenter went away. Evidently her holiday had unfitted her for duty, if duty this was. (When things are very unpleasant, it is safe to think them duties.) Dorla was not of the kind to get up and get out of a position in which she found herself because it was a disagreeable one. The tendency of her disposition was always to sacrifice herself. Her life had been very sad, and she always distrusted herself when she was at all happy. It was certain, she was leading a very unwise and unnecessary life, but there was no one to help her out of it. The executors of her mother's will decided it was best to retain the house and keep the children together. So everything remained as it had been before. A sort of governess had been placed over Dorla, who remained till she was eighteen. Then Dorla was considered old enough to guide the house herself. There was sufficient money to do all but make her happy (there had been more than enough to ruin Harry, poor sinful boy). It was a farce now to keep the house for him. He seldom was in it, and it was no restraint upon him. The knowledge of his sins was wasting the youth of his sister, and she was doing



him no good. What she needed was young companionship, healthy interests and pleasures. But there was no one to arrange it for her, and she had no ability to do it for herself, though she could have done it very well for anybody else.

T was the beginning of Lent; a chilly, grey, cold day. It was the anniversary of her mother's death, a day Dorla always spent most strictly. That morning she had been in church; this afternoon she was alone, beside her mother's picture, trying to read, with the weary feeling hours of emotion had produced.

Her life had been as quiet as ever this winter. Harriet she had hardly seen; partly because the latter had been much away, and partly because a new enthusiasm had taken hold of her. There was a young woman from the West, who had great musical talent, and she was Harriet's duty and pleasure at present. Harriet talked music, gave concerts, went to oratorios, had a box at the opera. There was no room for any other interests now. Dorla went to one or two parties, but she was allowed to languish in a corner while all the world was crowded round the piano. She went to one or two other parties, but they did not give her much amusement. She knew so few people, and was too timid to get along alone. The pleasures of Milford seemed very sweet at this distance.

One or two experiences, consequent upon those pleasures, however, had been not so sweet. One was the reception of the postponed declaration from Mr. Oliver. The other was a visit from young Rothermel. That had occurred about a month after her return from Milford. She was sitting in her room one day, when the servant brought up the card. It was a great surprise, and she was in fright and perplexity. She had begun to forget about

him, and felt that she had heard the last of him. She could not see him. She felt that if she did, there could be but one result. So, hurriedly, she sent the servant back to say, she begged he would excuse her. It was all done in a moment. When she heard the door shut, she was overwhelmed with regret, and saw how harsh it was. It would have been so much better to have been brave and to have seen him, and softened the blow, if it could not be averted. This occurrence filled her with regret and self-reproach for many days. But by degrees she thought less of it, and this February day she was sitting alone again, and hardly remembered that it had occurred. It is very true that the sorrows of others when they are not in our sight, do not break our spirits. Dorla could have been happy if there had been anything to be happy about.

There came a knock at the door. She unbolted it, and the servant handed her a letter.

It was from Harriet Varian, and Dorla sat down by the window to read it. Another letter fell out from it, which had a Milford post mark. She looked curiously at it but read Harriet's first. It began :

“DEAR DORLA,—Mamma received this strange letter this morning, and I should have brought it round to you myself, but we are just starting for Washington this evening. I don't know what you'll think about it. Of course, I'm very much distressed. Mamma is quite angry, but I tell her it isn't any fault of yours. You never dreamed it was coming to anything like this, and I am sure you did not give him much encouragement. Or if you did, you could not be supposed to know he was going to take it so to heart. Girls are always blamed for everything, it seems to me. Our Milford laundress (do you remember her? that French woman who used to do our things so beautifully) was here this morning to get a recommendation from mamma,—and she says all the people are talking about us, and saying how

shamefully you acted towards him. I shall always defend you, my dear, no matter what occurs, for you only did what any other girl would do, in just such circumstances, and it isn't fair to lay it on your shoulders. Write to me at Washington, and don't let this trouble you. Sorry that I can't see you to talk it over. We shall be away about a month. Good-bye. In greatest haste, yours always,

"H. H. V."

When Dorla laid this letter down, it seemed to her her heart did not beat, her blood did not move. She could not draw her breath, and it was a long moment before she could take up the letter from her lap. It was as follows :

"MRS. VARIAN.

"Madam,—I take the liberty of writing to you. I am in great trouble, and I write these few lines to tell you my son is dying. He was the best son a mother ever had, and it is hard to see him go, for he is my all. I do not reproach anybody for it. It is God's will. But if he had not seen your family ever he would not be now where he is. I meant to write a letter to that young lady, but I do not dare to trust myself. But I forgive her. Ever since he came back from the city (where he went so hopeful and so happy), he has not been like himself, and now for six weeks he has been lying on his bed, with fever, and such sufferings. But he doesn't suffer any now, so the Doctors say, for his mind is never here, and he only talks about *her* all the time. I hope God will forgive her, and never make her suffer the half of what she's brought into this house. I don't want to say harsh things about her. But Mrs. Varian, it is so hard to see him die, and to know it needn't have been so. I hope you will forgive my boldness in writing to you. I am very unhappy, for my boy was all I had, and I am afraid it is more than I can stand.

"Respectfully yours,

"MRS. A. ROTHERMEL."

There were some capitals that were unnecessary in this letter, and the signature was rather unconventional; all this Dorla saw; the cramped handwriting looked so exactly like Amanda's efforts. She sat still, like one frozen, and tried to take in what the strange letter meant. She read it over, time after time, from the date to the signature. The sense of it seemed to creep into her brain slowly; she did not receive it at once. She took in the sense of it, some-way like this:

"Then he is very ill, this young man who was so healthy and strong-looking; very ill indeed. Dying. May be he is dead already; this letter is dated—let me see, dated—Milford, the sixth of February. Yes, it is many days ago. He may be dead already; think of it, anybody so strong and well only a few short months ago. I cannot somehow take it in. I never thought about his dying, and it is his mother who writes; that gentle, pale, worn-out looking woman that we saw once when we stopped at the gate with him. He seemed so fond of her; and she hasn't any other child. The father is dead too; she is all alone. Poor woman, it is a terrible calamity. She says he was so good: I'm sure he was, not wild and bad like Harry. O! is not this a sad thing! That he should have to go, and so many men who only ruin themselves and give sorrow to those that care for them, to stay; so young too, with the chance of living such a good life, having children, and making the old house bright and pleasant. She will have to live always by herself, dreary and morbid, with all the windows shut up close, and nobody to look after the cattle and the farm. She will die soon herself, it is not likely she can live without him, when she has lived for him only for so many years. Oh, what a train of miserable things. I wonder how it has all come to pass—I don't understand how anybody can dare to say—O God! If it should be true. If it should in any little way be true. If I am any, *any* way to blame. O Lord! have mercy upon me—don't let me think this thing. *Don't let it be true. Save*

me from this or I want to die. What have I ever done to make it right that I should bear a thing like this. Oh, why—O! it isn't, isn't true. I didn't lead him on to this. I never said a word to make him think I liked him. I hate Harriet Varian. I wish that I had never seen her. I wish that I were dead. I never have any pleasure but it brings a punishment. I do not think I am worse than other girls, and yet see the things that happen to me. O, such an awful, awful thing as this. It is like murder; it is not any better. I shall have the blood of that man always against my soul. Because I liked to look pretty, and be admired, this has all come about. Because it pleased me to think that people talked about me, I shall have to feel that they are talking about me always now in another cruel way. I *told* Harriet not to ask him to go with us that night, but somehow she did ask him, and there the trouble was. It never would have come to this, if he had not gone with us that night and got on such familiar terms. It is so awful to think of what our little schemings bring about. And how well I remember, one day, when we were all sitting at the Bluff, I looked up and saw his eyes on me, as if he could not look away. And it gave me a strange sort of pleasure (O, how wicked I must have been), to think that he was in love with me and never saw anybody else. That was the only time I ever thought so; but here is this come upon me. All this for that one thought. O, it is not just, it is not right. I will not believe I ought to bear this load for that one little sin. O, if I were only dead. O, if I were the only one to suffer, it might be possible to carry it, but to think of that poor woman, and that man whose soul was gone perhaps even before I read this letter. O, if he were not ready! If his soul is lost for want of some prayer, some preparation. This is more, this is worse than I can suffer—Oh, how wicked I am growing—how my heart rebels—If I had somebody to help me, somebody to say a word, somebody to tell me what to do. O, mother! mother! pray

for me; pray for your poor Dorla; ask God to take this load away from me, and forgive me all I've done." And with a cry, she cast herself upon her knees, and burst into violent sobs.

It was an ordeal for so young, so conscientious a person, and one so very isolated in position. There was no one to take a disinterested view of it all, and tell her what she ought to do. With her brain stunned by this calamity, which had fired her conscience with such flaming accusations and left her judgment paralyzed, she was to decide upon what to do; and what she did, then, was to be the most important doing of her life. When she rose from her knees, ashy white, and shaking all over, she had resolved what to do. She went to the clock to see the hour; her eyes were so blinded and scorched with crying, she could not see across the room. It was almost five o'clock. She went to the table and hunted among the things there for a morning paper, and searched it hurriedly. But no list of the Erie trains was given in it, and she laid it down and turned over the papers in her desk for a time table. She was trembling so, it seemed to her, somebody ought to take care of her and do things for her. She wished she might call Amanda, somebody to find out for her what she wanted to know, but that was impossible. So putting on her bonnet and cloak, in some way, she made herself ready and went out, alone, into the street.

The gas was lit in the street lamps, the outer doors were shut and shades were down. She had rarely been so late outside the house without attendance; this added to her feeling of bewilderment. There was a depot, at which she felt sure she could find time tables of all the roads, not more than half a mile away. To that she went; through hackmen and newsboys, and policemen and expressmen, and cars and carriages and baggage wagons, she found her way into the office and at some desk. There, some one took pity on her and told her what she wanted to know, and

even wrote it down on a piece of paper. It is possible that she looked so agitated, the man feared she would not remember what he told her otherwise. There was no train till the next morning, at least none that it would be possible for her to reach. She must go home and wait till then.

She hardly knew, afterward, how she had passed the time that intervened; some heavy hours of sleep, and a horrid, horrid wakening. The day was raw and damp and chilly. After she was in the cars, it began to rain. She felt cold, so cold, all the time. Things looked worse to her to-day than they had looked yesterday. She was used to the thought now, indeed, it seemed centuries old; she felt as if the time had never been, when she had not known poor Rothermel lay dying, and she was the one whose vanity and folly had made it so. But with this thought and its dire train, had joined another, since those heavy hours of sleep, and that was the thought of what people would say about her going to Milford to see him, dead or dying, and throwing herself at his mother's feet and crying out for pardon, what the Varians, what the people at Milford, what the servants at home, what everybody would think if they saw her, practically and severely, going on this strange errand; what in fact, was the character of this errand, and whether she were wise in going on it. A thousand doubts arose; she shrank from the daylight view of it. But she never thought of drawing back; only it was like walking to the stake, without any certainty of anything except the pain.

She was quite unused to travelling alone—the getting her ticket, the watching for the station, were all so many alarming things. When at last they reached the station, she started as violently as if she had not been looking for it for an hour. Somebody called out something about the Milford stage; she followed the direction pointed out, and was put into the stage. She took the furthest seat inside the coach, two women followed her, and a man, wrapped up in a great coat

and with buckskin mittens on. These were all the passengers. The women talked a little to each other, and complained of the cold, or rather of the damp, for it was not very cold. The man looked awkward and uncomfortable, and stamped his feet occasionally to keep them warm, and leaned out of the window very often to see if they were not soon to start. But it took a long time to strap the two lean trunks upon the rack, and to get the mail bag from the office, and to settle well under the driver's seat a demijohn, a box of herring and a can of oil. It takes a good while to do things in the country, particularly in winter, and when they have all day before them.

But the poor young stranger on the furthest seat—sometimes she felt benumbed and callous, and then there would shoot across this apathy a fever flush of trepidation. She more than once put out her hand towards the coach-door, with a sudden ungovernable resolve to fly, to hide herself till the train passed through the town that would take her to New York. She felt at moments as if it were useless for her to fight against the fate that was carrying her step by step towards the bedside of the man whom she had injured, towards the presence of the mother who could not even "trust herself to write to her," towards publicity, towards curious eyes and busy tongues; then she felt at another moment, as if she had lost all conscience and all care for the judgment of Almighty God, and as if escape from the position to which she had condemned herself in her repentance was what she would fight for, die for, and be therewith content. These were the struggles that went on in her poor brain, as she sat trembling, shrinking back in her corner of the coach, her face hidden by a veil, all alone, a hundred miles from home, going on such an errand, naturally so far from brave, and so exaggeratedly womanish in her fear of tongues and eyes. Of course, the cold, hard hand of conscience kept her to the course on which she seemed sent by fate. If it had been death to which she was going, she would



have gone as she went now, with struggles, but with certainty.

At last the coach started, and with little notice from the shut houses and empty sidewalks, rolled out of the town. The rain was now only a drizzling mist, but it ate to the very bone. A coat of snow must have been lying even yesterday over all the country, and to-day's rain was washing it slowly off. Great patches of it lay on the fields, and along the fences, but no longer white and fresh. The fields, where they were uncovered, looked sodden and lifeless, the roads were uneven and full of mud, and deeply worn with the winter's travel. The trees were still, there was no wind, their bark was wet with the rain, their roots soaking in the unwholesome earth. The brook by the roadside was embedded in thick ice, and silent. A dreary thin mist hung low over the land, not thick enough to hide it, or to soften its blank cheerlessness. No cattle were in the fields, no life about the hills. During their long drive they met no living creature. The few farm-houses looked silent and untenanted. Dorla looked out of the window, and thought of the last time she had gone over this road. What a contrast to this day was the brilliant sky of that; the green and yellow fields, the woods smitten with early Autumn, the smooth road, the grassy bank beside them, the glancing brook, the fences touched with moss, and now and then twined with straggling vines, the ferns upon the rocks, the cattle in the fields, the birds about the trees, the squirrels darting along the fence beside them. And oh, the merry and unthinking people who looked upon it all, and said "good-bye." Dorla said to herself, which day is the dream, that day or this. And not four months apart.

The three passengers did not say much: they were shy country people and did not know each other well, and were perhaps a little uncertain of their silent neighbor. Dorla listened eagerly to hear if anything should be said about the Rothermels. She had kept her mind busy with a strange

sort of speculation, about the way in which she should probably hear if he were already dead. She said to herself, "may be I shall meet the funeral train; that would be like a novel. Or perhaps some one will call out the news as we drive up to the post-office. Or, I shall not hear it till I get into the house, and the mother will point me to the room where he lies in his coffin, and curse me, and tell me to go out from her sight. Or as is more probable, I shall find he has been dead for days, and the raw yellow clay of some new grave will catch my eye as we drive past the cemetery. Whichever way it is to be, how I wish that I could know. It is so much easier to bear yourself rightly if you know what is to come upon you."

But none of these things were to come upon her, alas.

As they drove over the bridge across the Vandermarck, and she felt that they were in the village, the same impulse to escape came upon her, and she stretched out her hand to the door.

"Do you want to get out here?" said one of the women.

"Shall I call the driver?" said the man, glad of something to say and the prospect of something to be done.

"No!" she said faintly, sinking back into the corner.

"It is further on. No matter."

O, the village, with its dismal silent streets, its shut up houses. O would it ever be summer again in it; would these bare trees ever "flush into variety again." The hotels were partly closed, the cottages shut up. She thought of the little piazzas grouped with gay colored dresses; of the white parasols flitting up and down the village street; of the pretty children with their nurses; parties of pleasure going off in the great wagons to the woods and falls. Around the store and the post-office were two or three country wagons tied; a solitary man came out to get the mail bag from the driver. Another man came to the steps of the coach and put his head in at the window to collect the fare, and to know where the four passengers were to be set down. The man,

and one of the women were to be left somewhere about the village, near. The other woman was to be taken half-way on the road to Dingman's.

"And you," said the collector of the fare, with a nod, looking at Dorla. She gasped for breath, and spoke twice before the words came clear. He did not even then quite get the name, and she had to say it over. He said, "which Rothermel," for there were two. She had to explain where the Rothermels lived to whose house she would be taken.

"Ah," he said, and he looked at her with a shade of curiosity. This was the first time that she had spoken the name. It gave her a strange sensation.

Hanging on to the coach door, he called out to the driver to go on, and so they drove down the main street of the village. One of the passengers was to be left at the last hotel on the street. There, two or three men were standing about the steps, and there the demijohn and the box of herring were to be taken down. The men talked a little to each other. One on the piazza said to a man who had got on the box with the driver:

"Have you heard from George Rothermel to-day?"

"No," said the man addressed. "He was alive last night, lying very low."

"You've got a passenger inside for Rothermel's," said the collector of the fares, looking up to the driver; he was "settling" with the proprietor of the can of oil and the herrings. "You'll leave her, as you take that other woman down to Dingman's."

"All right," the driver said, and after a few professional details, gathered up the reins and started at a steady pace for Rothermel's.

The farm lay about a mile and a half out of the village, on the river road; Dorla had often walked beyond it in the summer. Now, as they went splashing and rolling through the rough and muddy road, she felt as if it never were possible that she could have done so. And yet, when she first

caught sight of the house, no longer hidden by the surrounding trees, she felt a shock as if they had come too quick, and she were unprepared for being there as soon. In fact, unpreparedness was what she felt more than any of the emotions she had anticipated. Though she had had so many hours to prepare herself, and had thoughts of nothing else, she was in a state of bewilderment, and did not know what she should say, or whether she could say anything at all.

"Here you are," called out the driver from his seat; while the woman inside, seeing perhaps her trepidation, pushed the coach door open for her, and offered to help her to get out. She stammered thanks, and got out by herself, and tried to shut the door. The driver, rather impatient perhaps at being brought so far out of his way on this chilly drizzling day, started forward abruptly, and left her standing alone at the gate. Before she got it open, he was half-way down the hill.

The house stood back about fifty feet from the road; a path paved with brick and bordered with flower beds led up to the small piazza. The front windows of the house were all closed; across the fresh paint of the piazza floor there was not a single foot mark; the gate had opened as if unused. Of course, but Dorla did not see it, there was a second gate and a second path that led up to another entrance, that of the familiar and comfortable region of sitting-room and kitchen. No one had seen her come; she was all alone before a dead, silent house, *must* she awaken it? Even at that moment she felt the impulse to fly and save herself. But instead of yielding to it, she walked to the door, and with a hand that almost refused obedience, knocked. No answer came, the faint sound died away, and she stood, shivering with cold and fear, uncertain what to do. The rain dripped from the dead leaves of the honeysuckle on the lattice; she thought, how strange that Chinese honeysuckles keep their leaves all winter. She never could lose anything, even in her greatest moments of excitement. Then her eyes fell upon some tall

slim plants, well matted from the winter. "What can country people see in dahlias, that they take such care of them?" she thought. "Tall, stiff, artificial things. Oh, if they don't come soon I shall die of this damp chill stillness. I wish the wind blew. This is horrible. I don't know whether I am alive or dead. I must knock once again."

And again she knocked, this time accidentally making a louder noise. Then, after a moment, came a sound of steps within, and the unbarring of the door. At that, her heart stood still; and when the door opened a little way, and a servant appeared, she was really too choked to speak a syllable. The woman asked her what she wanted, and that had the effect of rousing her a little.

"I want to speak to Mrs. Rothermel," she said in a low voice.

The servant motioned her to come inside, and took her into a large square room at the left of the hall, that might have been the family vault, for all the warmth and light of it. It struck a horror to the very soul of the young visitor; it was as much worse as possible than the raw cold outside. She shuddered from head to foot, and thrust her hands tighter in her muff. The servant rattled and battered for some time at one of the windows, and finally threw back a shutter. Then taking a chair, she planted it in the centre of the room, and told the young lady to sit down, and went away. She was so cold and bewildered, she really had no thought of what was to come; she saw, as in a dream, the ungainly pattern of the ingrain carpet on the floor, and the photographs in their oval gilt frames on the wall, the big unused books, and the two or three shells upon the table between the windows. In a moment more the woman came back, and told her she had better come into the sitting-room and warm herself; she'd have to wait a while, for Mrs. Rothermel was making something in the kitchen and couldn't leave it for a minute. Thereupon, Dorla followed her into a room at the back of the house. This room was long, and rather nar-

row, running across the back of the house, but it was warm, and had many windows, which made it very light. It was home-like and natural, with no attempt at ornament; no shells, and no oval photographs. There were one or two deep, comfortable, leather-covered chairs, and a "settee" with a turkey red cover on it; a tall clock; two or three hanging book-shelves, and an old-fashioned secretary. There were two lamps on the chimney piece, an inkstand and a match stand. And on a little shelf near, were some pipes and a tobacco pouch. And in a corner of the room, with a window on each side, stood a small melodeon, and on it, a pile of old music books, and some newer sheets of music. The sight of these things gave Dorla a strange and sudden emotion. She felt cold and dull no longer, but stirred to the very heart. There was such an oppressive silence: the ticking of the clock alone broke it, and the careful movements in the room overhead.

Presently, the door leading from the kitchen opened and some one came in. Dorla recognized in an instant the mother. She was a sweet, delicate-looking old woman, ordinarily pale, but to-day a little flushed with her work about the fire, and perhaps some agitation.

"I am sorry," she said, coming across the room, and adjusting her apron as she came; "I am sorry you had to wait so long. Sit down, won't you? I don't believe I know just who it is. I find I don't remember faces as I used to do."

Dorla stood, pale as ashes. The old woman went on speaking with embarrassment.

"You must excuse me my dear, for not being able to call you by your name. I always was a little apt to be forgetful. But since this trouble, I am hardly able to remember what I want to say from one minute to another. I'm all unstrung and helpless."

And a little sob or moan closed the sentence, and the poor woman passed her hand before her eyes.

"Mrs. Rothermel," began Dorla, in a low tone, starting towards her, and then stopping and clasping her hands together, instead of putting them upon the broken and suffering old woman, "Mrs. Rothermel, I don't expect you to know my face, and I wish you did not know my name. You hate me—you think that I have done you wrong; and may be it is true. I have come to tell you that I did not mean it—that I am broken-hearted to have given anybody pain. I never dreamed of making him unhappy, believe me. I am not a girl that could do such a thing as that; I am not the sort of person that you think me. I may have been foolish and vain. I suppose I was, but it is not in my nature to trifle with anybody. Oh, if you could only know what I have suffered since Mrs. Varian sent your letter to me, you would be sorry for me a little. I came here without stopping a moment, even to think about it. I felt as if I should die, if you would not say you could forgive me. Oh, tell me that you can, and that you believe me; indeed, indeed I speak the truth."

She held her clasped hands imploringly towards the mother, who, steadying herself by the table near which they stood, looked at her bewildered. "And this is Miss St. John," she said, slowly, "Dorla, that he talks about. I thought she was a great beauty, and always very fine."

"Oh, no, no, I am not," she exclaimed, eagerly. "I am not beautiful, nor anything. I am very plain and quiet, and try to be a good girl and do my duty when I know what it is. Don't condemn me, don't be hard on me. Do I look as if I could do a thing like that, lead a man on to like me, and then break his heart. Oh, say you don't believe it; say it is not true!"

"No, I don't believe it!" cried the poor woman, stretching out her arms to Dorla. "I don't believe it; and I thank God it isn't true."

Dorla threw herself into her arms, and wept with the abandonment of relief, as if the words had redeemed her.

The poor mother clasped her arms about her and wept with her.

"I could not believe, for a long time," she said, in a broken voice at last, "that any one had meant to deceive my boy."

"How could they?" said Dorla. "So kind, and good, and so straightforward."

"So gentle and so good a son," moaned the poor woman. "So careful for his mother always; you might be sure he could love the one he set his heart upon. Poor George! Oh, if he only knew."

"Oh, what a load you have taken from my heart!" said Dorla, "since you say that you believe me and will forgive me for what I have been so unhappy as to do. If I could only comfort you in any way, or help you in any way to bear your dreadful sorrow. But I know that is impossible."

"You have helped me," said the poor woman, with trembling arms, still clasped about her. "It helps me to have no hard feelings towards anybody in the world. I can bear it from God, but I couldn't bear it from a woman. God Almighty has a right to do what He pleases with us all. I can submit to Him; it is very different when there is no wrong from any one."

"Yes," said Dorla, softly, "I am sure I know how you feel about it. Grief is very different from bitterness."

"I never was one to have hard feelings," said the poor mother, drying her eyes as she sat down on the settee, trembling still, so that she could scarcely stand. "I have always been one for peace. It has never been my way to have hard thoughts of people. I have had a good many troubles, first and last, but that hasn't ever been among them. But now, when it came to George—when it came to giving him up for—for—"

And she cried again, as if the very memory of the pain were intolerable, and Dorla, half kneeling beside her, pressed



her lips upon her poor shaking hands, and whispered, "Do not say it, it makes me so unhappy."

"No, I won't say it," she answered, suppressing her sobs, "For maybe God meant it all along. I know you did not do it evilly, I know you are a good honest girl, and he only misunderstood."

"That was it indeed," said Dorla, eagerly. "You know how easy it is to be led all astray by some little word, some little bit of a mistake."

"Yes" said Mrs. Rothermel, with a deep sigh. "I know how that can be; for I know how near George's father was to going away and never speaking, for some little thing I did and never meant it. Men are so quick; they don't stop to reason when they are in love, they think a woman means every thing, and never think that she has feelings too."

Dorla felt the blood rushing to her face: she saw she had been misunderstood, but she had not the hardihood to put her companion right, though she tried to say something to correct the error without wounding her with the hard truth. But her incoherent words passed for agitation; the poor mother only put her arms again around her, and passed her hand tenderly over her hair; and she felt her tears fall upon her head. Oh! how they scorched and burned her! This was worse than it had been before. The poor mother thought they had a common sorrow. "If I could only make her understand," thought Dorla, in an agony of perplexity. But it was not easy. She had found one to whom she could speak of her darling, and she poured out her heart in broken words of confidence.

"So handsome," she said, "so clever, so much above all the young men about him. He could have married anybody, anybody that he had wanted. But he had never looked at any of them—never could be coaxed or teased into liking any girl in all the country round. People said he held himself above them because he'd had a college education and had money. But it wasn't that, it was because he

was above them, because he was so different, because he was himself—my poor, handsome, good boy!" Then wringing her hands. "O, don't you think God might hear yet, might listen if we both asked to have him live. Can't you think of some words to say! Maybe I haven't said everything I ought. My head feels so I cannot think of things. Pray for him if you can my child. Pray for him—ask God to let him stay."

Dorla had in her pocket a little book, one of the red-edged family that afforded Harriet Varian so much innocent amusement, and she took it and began to look for a prayer she had said many times already for poor George, since she heard of his condition. She was still kneeling by Mrs. Rothermel, with her arms in her lap, and she only bent her head lower, and read the prayer in a voice just audible. There was a long silence; then Mrs. Rothermel, kissing her, said it had been a comfort to her.

"And now, my dear," she continued, wiping the tears from her face as she got up, "you had better come up and see him."

Dorla felt the hot flush all over her face again as she heard this.

"Perhaps I had better not," she said, recoiling involuntarily. The mother looked startled and pained.

"Why?" she asked. "Do you think it would make you feel badly? He is not so very much changed. He is like a picture, he is so handsome and so still."

"Perhaps it might shock and startle him to see me suddenly," she faltered, holding back.

"Ah!" said the poor mother with a heavy sigh. "All the world might come into his room and he wouldn't know it. It is days and days since he has noticed any one. He is past that, my dear, ah, long past that."

Dorla's hat had fallen to the floor; she stooped to pick it up, trembling all over. What should she do? Mrs. Rothermel held out her hand; she wondered in her heart that Dorla could hesitate a moment about looking upon that face

again. She began to feel that she, for her part, had been too many minutes out of sight of it already ; precious minutes of which there were so few left to her. The pull upon her heart was always felt when he was out of her sight, and had been ever since he was a baby.

Dorla conquered the strong feeling that made her recoil from this step.

"What difference can it make," she said to herself. "Perhaps I owe it to him to look once more upon him, and pray beside his death-bed for forgiveness for the vanity that killed him."

She took the mother's hand, and followed her out of the room and up the stairs. When they came to the door of the sick-room they paused. No sound came from within, but the regular motion of a rocking-chair, in which an elderly stout woman sat, near the fire. The mother pushed open the door, and they entered. There was a strong smell of vinegar, and Dorla shivered. How she hated the smell of vinegar. "Why do country people always have vinegar about the room when any one is ill," she thought, as they approached the bed. "And why are their souls so bound up in patch-work quilts."

Thus she stood, thinking these very grovelling thoughts, beside poor George's bed, and seeing the stars and flowers of the pattern on the counterpane with the same eyes that looked on his death-stricken face. The woman by the fire got up and came towards them in manifest curiosity, for Dorla's beautiful hair had partly fallen down, and the emotions that had been dyeing her cheeks and filling her eyes, made her look very lovely, and the old woman could not imagine who she was and whence she came. The mother let go her hand, and stooped with irresistible desire towards the poor sufferer on the bed. She smoothed his hair, touched his forehead with her hand, and laid the sheet softly over his wasted arms. Dorla stood tall, and erect, and silent, looking down at him.

"How do you think he looks?" said the woman, in her ordinary voice, addressing Dorla. Dorla, shocked at the tone, made some whispered answer. "Oh, you needn't be afraid to speak loud," she said. "He doesn't hear a thing."

"Nothing disturbs him now," said the poor mother, with tears, speaking low from instinct.

The woman whom they had found in the room, and who was a neighbor, was a little deaf, and was quite determined to enter into communication with Dorla, and satisfy her curiosity. She made many observations, and at last, Dorla, shocked and frightened, and anxious to put an end to the conversation, answered her in her usual voice, possibly a little heightened. At this sound, strange and wonderful result! The figure on the bed moved slightly; a little contraction passed over the features, the eyes opened, and after an instant of amazed uncertainty, a smile of intelligence came into the eyes, and lifting his feeble hand, he said, "You have let me come!"

A low cry of joy burst from the mother, who raised herself up quickly. The neighbor, with an exclamation of amazement, pushed Dorla forward, who stooped and took his hand in hers. For a moment or two he gazed at her with an expression of earnestness and satisfaction; then, with a long breath, he turned slightly upon his side, and seemed to sleep quietly and naturally. He still held her hand, not relaxing his hold when his eyes closed.

"He'll come round all right now!" cried the old woman, in exultation. "He's past the crisis and has taken the right turn."

Poor Mrs. Rothermel trembled and wept with joy, bending down to kiss Dorla, and whispering she had saved him.

"He hasn't noticed any one for more'n ten days now," went on the woman in attendance. "He hasn't heard if you shouted at him (she was shouting now it seemed to Dorla). He's been like the dead, but he's taken the right turn. See how he sleeps there, like a baby, and his

eyes are shut. He'll pull through now, you mark my words."

There was no need to mark her words, it was enough to mark the changed and relaxed face on the pillow, and to hear the even and regular breath that came from his lips. The house was in a tumult. One went to summon the doctor; the mother was wild with the sudden hope; even the phlegmatic old woman was restless with excitement. Only Dorla sat as if in a trance, holding the thin, heated hand in hers, feeling the mother's tears and kisses raining on her cheek, praying that God would hear her prayers, and not punish her for her cold and stony heart; for she was not glad he was coming back to life. It was all like a dream.

"I wish I had not come," she said to herself, and then asked God to forgive her, when she seemed to have saved a life by coming; when He seemed to be granting what she had been constantly asking for since—since when? This time yesterday she had not heard that he was ill. It was not twenty-four hours since she had been quietly, and complacently, and comfortably at home, and it seemed as if she had been in trouble and perplexity for years, and as if she were now almost hardened and remorseless.

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It was night, and Dorla was alone in the spare-room of the house, which was unused, cold, and strange. A great fire was burning in the stove, but it seemed to make no impression upon the dead cold air of the room. The result most forcible to her senses, was an unfamiliar and disagreeable smell of heated iron, and a giddy moving sensation in the air, such as you see when the stove is between you and the daylight. She crept into the bed; it was like lying down in the sea and drawing the ice up around you.

"If I could get warm I really would not mind anything," thought the poor girl, shivering. "If I only could

get warm, I really am so tired I know I could get asleep, without thinking of anything at all."

There was a slight smell of kerosene oil which came from the lamp which she had just put out, and she buried her head in the icy pillow, with an irritated sense of misery. What was it to her, she thought, all the remorse, and excitement, and bewilderment she had gone through? Nothing if she could only get warm, and stop smelling disagreeable things. It was nothing to her that the doctor had pronounced this man likely to live, this man whom she had come a hundred miles to see, this man who had held her hand and called her Dorla, whose mother had wept upon her neck, and called her daughter, whose very neighbors had spoken to her as if she had loved him and had come to mourn him. It was nothing to her, all this entanglement and trouble, nothing, if she might once feel warm again and get asleep. Having suffered all she was capable of suffering mentally, the carnal part of her took up the fight, and carried it on with a fierce rancor. It was almost dawn before she slept.

## II.

**I**T was nearly five o'clock, a soft lovely afternoon in May, and Dorla was on her knees in church, where she had been much and often of late. This was the last time that she would come, till she came to-morrow, to be married. Plenty of time she had had to think it over, since that dreary February day, when she had found George Rothermel was going to live,—plenty of time, but not plenty of help; and her own miserable thoughts had always revolved in one dark circle.

“I shall never be happy myself. Can I make others so? Sacrifice is the best thing in the world. I have it in my power to benefit others by a sacrifice.” Poor child. It is hard to fight these battles alone, and not always wise. That afternoon, in her agony of uncertainty, she had risen from her knees, and had cast so appealing a look towards the clergyman as he passed out of the church, that he had been startled and perplexed, and had half turned back to speak to her. But it was unconventional; there were others yet in church. So, full of uncertainty also whether he had not mistaken the glance, he went away into the robing-room, and after he had laid aside his surplice, returned into the church, to find that every one else had gone, and Dorla had sunk again upon her knees. He lingered, wishing that she might look up, and give him a chance to speak to her. But there is such a barrier of ice between priest and people—conventionalities, customs, precedent. What young girl would not rather die than go to a distant, dignified gentleman for whom she has the veneration of girlhood for middle age, of parishioner for pastor, and pour out her

miserable heart and ask counsel? He is a voice speaking to her from the clouds, and bringing her a blessing out of Heaven; but he knows no more of the state of her soul than if she had none. She has never heard of any one who has done the like before. She does not know what language to speak to him in; she has never talked to him except in distant courtesy before, and she does not know if he could understand her. She has always had to keep her own soul herself, and she does not know but that it is her duty to go on keeping it. If she were a criminal, preparing for the scaffold, of course she knows she would have the benefit of a clergyman to help her. It would be conventional and right for her to send for one, or for one to present himself and offer help. But being only a poor young creature, trying to live well and to get ready to die righteously, at an uncertain date, it may be presumptuous, or worse, ridiculous, to ask for counsel and for help. Undoubtedly it is her duty to live on generalities, and to govern her soul by the broad rules that are given out for the government of the hundreds of other souls in the same cure. Poor Dorla! There wasn't anybody else in the congregation condemned to marry George Rothermel tomorrow from a sense of duty; and a little particular aid, in the rendering of the law of sacrifice, would have been like a draught of fresh water on a salt sea. As well expect a fever patient to take charge of his own case because he has heard many courses of lectures on medicine since he was a boy. Dorla had heard as many sermons, and read as many "good books," as most persons of her age, and had a much stronger desire than most of them, to do what was right; and yet she was on the brink of doing what was most unwise, nay, of what was absolutely wrong, because there was no one to tell her what was duty, and what was not, no one to show her what had blinded her and why she was so confused.

And the only one to whom she would turn, by reason of



her isolated position, was one who, by the cold rule of custom and the age, was further off than any other. He longed to help her, longed to know what was going on in her heart, but there was no right by which he felt he could go to her, and ask such confidence, there had been no intercourse before that could sanction him in doing so; the officer of the bank who paid her over her dividends would have been just as much entitled by precedent to penetrate to the sanctuary of her heart as he.

"We are too far off from our people, we Anglicans," he said to himself as he took up his respectable hat and went away, leaving poor Dorla on her knees. "What do I know of my charge till they come to die. Then if there is time and inclination, and all things fitting, they open their hearts to me. I am not the shepherd of the living but of the dead. I know no more of the condition of these hundreds of souls than I know of the condition of their wardrobes or of the condition of their bank accounts. Are they growing or are they dwindling? All cannot bear the same meat. All are not capable of guiding themselves. I only know of my work by its end, or by a notorious failure. When a soul goes to open ruin, I hear of it, but then it is too late. A spiritual coroner. These people have no pastor."

And he went away with a heavy sigh. For he was a man of large and tender heart, and much wisdom and insight into spiritual things. But he was by nature shy and awkward, and as unfitted as a very young and shrinking person, from breaking through conventional rules, and forcing an entrance where there was none established.

And so Dorla was left to her fate; and it did her no good that she was left unwillingly. As has been said, she had had plenty of time to think, but her thoughts were all tainted by a morbid and unjust view of life, and her judgment was full of error. She had said to herself again and again, "I shall never be happy. I shall never love any one

particularly. My life benefits no one. Harry has left me, and it is a mockery to say I can do him any good. As for this man who loves me, I have done him a wrong. I owe him reparation. It will make him happy if I marry him,—and his dear good mother—kind good people, who through me have suffered a great deal. If I disappoint them now, and undeceive them about my feelings for him, I shall perhaps double the wrong I have already done. He knows I do not love him, as people talk about love generally, but that does not appear to matter to him—and I need not tell him how bitter and impossible it seems to me to marry him. It is because I am so selfish, that I feel so; because I am not willing to live for others and sacrifice myself. What better could I do than this? God surely will be pleased with me. This will be laying down my life. Dying would be so much easier. What makes it so very hard? I cannot tell, except that I am so very selfish, and think so much about myself. I do not dislike him; I should like him very well if it were not for this. I am very fond of his mother; she is sweet, and always so good to me. It is very foolish that I cannot get used to it, that she expresses herself differently from ourselves and that she signs herself Mrs. A. Rothermel. That would be a fine reason for refusing to be her daughter-in-law, and for making her unhappy for the remainder of her life. I think I shall have to find a better reason than that for being so unkind. And what reason have I? Reason—none, nothing but feelings, instincts, impulses. I would rather die to-morrow than marry him. I would rather go out as a servant. I would rather go into a prison where I should never see the sun again. And why? There is no why—only because I feel so. I like him; I think him kind, good; I think him handsome. There is no other man I want to marry. There is no other that I have ever liked or ever fancied that I liked. Have I any right to listen to these feelings? Have I any right to break the heart of a man who has so faith-

fully loved me? to wound one who had been so good to me? Why what a ruin it would make of those two lives! They seem to care for nothing, to plan for nothing, but for me. I can't think what would happen to them if I were suddenly to tell them all the truth. No, I will not tell them. They shall never know, and I will try to do my duty always. I am sure I shall be helped if I try honestly. People always are helped in getting through their duty. Besides what choice have I? I owe it to them. I have got to do this thing. No matter whether the sin that drew this on me seems little or great to me. It only seems a little vanity that made his admiration sweet to me. That is because I am not careful about my soul, and do not know what sin is. Yes, it was a sin, and I am to be punished for it all my life. Well, I should be glad that I can pay for it here. I will pay. I promise before God I will not draw back. There! Am I not bound. Why should I not rest now and stop torturing myself? And yet—O, I don't feel as if to-morrow could come, as if God would let it come. I am sure something will happen. I know I shall never stand before that altar to say those words to *him*. And yet why not to him as well as to any one. People say them every day. Perhaps they always feel so when they are making up their minds. No, I don't mean that exactly. I know that is not so. But maybe love comes after, and it is not wise to wish to feel too much. Oh, my foolish dreams! O, all the hopes and castles and pictures! They are not to mean anything! Life is very different from all that. I make a sacrifice of all these. I bury them. I am only going to live for duty and for Heaven, and when I am old, I shall say how much better it was that I bore this in my youth."

These were some of the thoughts that went through poor Dorla's mind as she knelt in church and tried to pray. Poor child; she got up at last, and went away—away, to her lonely home, where the prosaic preparations for to-mor-

row met her eyes whichever way she turned them, and where it was only better to be, because she could not think as ceaselessly and uselessly as she did in church. One cannot live always at high tragedy pitch; and by *to-morrow* she was tame and dull enough to please even her own sense of duty. She literally did not care what happened to her—and though to the last moment she never lost her faith that something would happen to prevent the marriage, it was only a faint surprise to her to find that nothing did, and that she was married to George Rothermel. She went through the service with quiet self-possession, and the clergyman, who had been haunted with her wild appealing look of the night before, was quite reassured, and accused himself of great folly, and congratulated himself that he had not exhibited it by speaking to her in the church.

Very few witnessed her marriage, and fewer still came to the house afterward,—for poor Dorla knew very few people, and was shy of asking even those she knew. Some middle-aged, quiet people who had been her mother's friends, the elderly gentleman who was her guardian, a school-mate (with whom she had exchanged the inevitable girlish promises), and some plain out-of-town connections of the Rothermels, were all who were invited. The Varians were away, to Dorla's great relief—(all the discussion of her resolution had been by letter). Every one talked in low tones, and appeared ill at ease; it was not very festive. Only Dorla seemed quite unembarrassed and quiet. She went about among the guests in her white clothes, apparently forgetting that she was a bride, and got pictures for some children to look at, and made the old ladies comfortable, and provided for the wants of every one, in the most matter-of-fact way. George stood in an awkward rapture of bliss. He was the only one of the party who at all came up to the requirements of the occasion. Some one congratulated her on the fine weather, and she looked inquiring.

“O, I forgot,” she said, with a laugh. But it wasn't

much of a laugh. It might have been somebody else's wedding for all the sentiment she had about the sun's shining on her. Even when she went to cut the bride-cake, followed by three or four awe-struck children, she seemed principally intent upon having them each take a very large slice. And upon the conclusion of a congratulatory speech from her guardian, she turned to a servant and begged that the basement door should be shut, and the smell of fried oysters if possible kept below, showing that she had not followed the good gentleman's remarks, nor appropriated any of the flowers of speech with which he had been strewing her path.

It was not a very picturesque nor a very brilliant beginning, her young school-mate thought, who had, with her, often whispered confidential anticipations about this great, this inevitable day, "this day their souls had singled out of time and marked for bliss." Certainly it was rather tame, rather disappointing. Middle-aged people, and people not much used to society, might have thought it all very well, but to Dorla's contemporaries it was chilling, and Dorla, with all her beauty, was not at all one's ideal bride, and had an expression that would have suited much better black serge and starched muslin, than lace and orange flowers. Altogether it was incongruous, and the young people were glad to go away.



**A**FTER all the high tragedy of the time preceding her marriage day, the dullness of the day itself, and the weariness and discomfort of the days of her wedding journey, it was, perhaps, illogical and commonplace, but Dorla became rather happy and contented. She loved the country with all her nature, and had a feeling of thankfulness that she was to be in it always, and thought of the life she had left without regret. There was great

relief in knowing that everything was settled, and that she need ask herself no more questions. She had great need of rest, and it was almost happiness to her to have it. The country was lovely; there was much beauty in her new home, with all its simplicity, and she was left a great deal to herself. No one preyed upon her and demanded her attention, as in the days of that weary wedding journey. George was away almost all the day, either about his farm business, or at his law office in the village. And dear old Mrs. Rothermel was so happy, and so proud of her daughter-in-law, she made herself her slave, and was consequently busy as a slave from morning to night. Dorla had a pony-carriage and a pony which she could drive herself; she had the blessed woods in which to roam and be silent, the fields in which to be free and to breathe the sunshine; ferns, violets, anemones, clover, butter-cups, and wild roses. These were the things that always came into her mind when she recalled that first month of her country life. She had always spent June in the city before; this was a revelation to her. The garden beds were full of the trophies that she brought from her long rambles in the woods. To be sure they never lived, but it was such an occupation, such an interest to her—dear little ferns, how she loved them, and how delicious the smell of the soft brown earth. Sometimes they grew on such beautiful pieces of rock, and then she dragged home as much of the rock as she could carry, and put them in the shade, and hung over them day by day with solicitude. The house was filled with moss-covered bits of branches, with tassels of chestnut blossoms, with curious leaves, with wild buckwheat, with endless, endless bunches of ferns and vines. What a lunacy it must have seemed to the dear old mother-in-law! But everything that the beautiful young creature did, who had come to make George happy, was right, and to be approved in her eyes. The “brakes” and dead branches were all sacred, and she would not even call old bird’s nests rubbish.

Dorla did not know anything of country housekeeping, and would fain have learned, obedient to her sense of duty. But this was desecration. The old mother only lived to serve her, and she was permitted to have no share in any household duty. It was quite *en regle* for her to have anything she wanted, and no innovations were looked upon as painful. Her own room was refurnished for her by George before she came, and was very fresh and pretty. The parlor was a sorrow to her, and George had divined it after a few days, so that was all changed. And before June was over, it was really a charming room, white matting, white muslin at the windows, pale cretonne over the horse hair offences, some pretty pictures that Dorla had brought with her, two or three quaint and graceful chairs, a screen, some candlesticks and vases for the mantelpiece. All the fireboard abomination was done away with, some old andirons brought from the garret, and a low fender, and there on cool evenings blazed a cheerful fire. A marble-topped table, whose ugliness made one quail, was covered with cretonne to match the furniture, and a fluted border. There stood the pretty lamp, some new books cut and uncut, Dorla's dainty work basket, and a vase of flowers. The room was quite a pleasure to her. In the morning it was full of sunshine; in the afternoon it was cool and shadowy. George considered it a miracle of art, and his mother brought her visitors to see it, on tip-toe, as if it were asleep and must not be disturbed. They sat in the sitting-room, and Dorla was not always called to see them. Of course they did not like her, with all her graciousness; the one thing people never forgive, is superiority. All were sure Dorla did not want to know them, and felt she was above them. This was the one little trial that obscured the ferns and the violets, and made her occasionally remember that there were other things besides these inanimate ones, that would have to be faced by-and-by, and that she could not rest forever and dream as she was doing now. Why don't they like me when

George and his mother do so much? she wondered innocently.

George was so devoted and so good to her, and so proud of her, she would have been a heathen if she had not begun to feel some kind of affection for him. He also had a good deal of delicacy, and did not bore her very much, and was so happy, he was willing to do all that any body asked of him, and that was a good deal, between his law and his farm. He had some tact, and soon saw what pleased her, what expressions to avoid, what occupations to keep out of sight, what interests to assume. Added to this he was very good-looking, and had learned to dress himself in good taste; she was less and less offended every day, and was gradually surrounded by the refinements that were necessary to her. If she had put it into words, she would have said, "How thankful I ought to be that I did my duty. Now I am really happy." It was indeed a pleasure to be worshipped and waited on by two such people as George and his mother; and she felt all the time that without any effort of her own, she was making them entirely happy. And the little shadow of the neighbors' disapproval fell across her path but seldom.

Thus June wore away; and it was like being awakened out of a peaceful dream, when one afternoon early in July, Harriet Varian's shrill voice arrested her half way up the cliffs that rose from the orchard at the back of the house, and brought her down to level ground, and to the realization that the city influx had indeed begun.

"Why, Dorla, child," cried Harriet, kissing her enthusiastically, "we've been here since yesterday, and you haven't been to see us. I surely thought you would have been down before we were through breakfast."

"I don't go to the village every day," said Dorla, with embarrassment, "and I had not heard that you had come."

"Why, what on earth do you do, if you don't go to the



village?" Harriet asked. "I should think it would be the only thing to do. You must come and stay a few days at the hotel with us after every body comes."

"I couldn't think of that," said Dorla, hurriedly.

"But it's going to be really nice this year," said Harriet. "Excellent people coming. We shall have a capital time. Indeed a good many are here already, but things never get started for a week or two you see. You know you came just in the midst of it all last year. It does seem so funny Dorla, to think of your being married, and settled here, of all places in the world, and of all people in the world, to poor George Rothermel! If anybody had told us last summer, do you think we could have believed it possible. Ah! what droll things do happen!"

Dorla's very throat grew crimson as these words were spoken, of which Harriet made a note, for it was all she could see under the shade hat of her companion, and tried to turn the subject, but went back to it again from very fascination.

"What do you do here all day long?" she said again, looking curiously towards her.

"Do? why amuse myself and walk and drive as people generally do in the country," said Dorla, with some dignity.

"O, then you're not busy, not occupied about—about the house?"

"O, no; I don't milk the cows, if you mean that, nor make the beds, nor bake the bread. Mrs. Rothermel is very fond of housekeeping, and she has two excellent servants, and I am only in the way about those matters."

"Ah," said Harriet much enlightened, (this had been one of the objects of her visit); "and you don't, really, now mind the country so *very* much?"

By the country she meant George Rothermel, marrying below her and marrying from a sense of duty, but Dorla only chose to take it literally.

"Mind it," she exclaimed, "why I think it is a paradise, and I hope I may live here all my life."

Harriet gave an exclamation of delight, and called her a plucky darling; she did not believe her exactly, but she liked to have people stand up to their colors, and she was glad to be relieved of a little weight that had rested on that part of her that she called her conscience. If Dorla declared she was so happy, there was an end of it forever. She gave her a little hug, and proceeded to ask her a great many questions, and to be very curious in her inspection of every thing. Dorla felt it would have to be endured once, and it might as well be now as any time. So she answered patiently, and explained the surroundings as well as she could. They walked leisurely through the orchard and garden, and came towards the house from the side. "What room is this," she asked. "Is it your parlor? And this, the sitting room? And that's where the family sit?"

"The family," said Dorla with a flush, "the family—do you mean Mrs. Rothermel. She sits there, yes, sometimes—so do I."

"Oh, yes, of course. Now let us go and see the parlor." Harriet was charmed with the parlor, with the porch, with the yard and the old trees in front. In fact she had begun to think of it as a delightful place, and to wonder whether Dorla wouldn't invite her often to make up parties and come out there to tea. She pressed her arm affectionately as this thought passed through her mind.

"It is all charming," she said, "you are delightfully fixed, and you'll have a lovely summer. Everybody at the hotel is crazy to see you, and you'll be quite the rage."

"O, thank you," returned Dorla rather curtly, "I've had enough of rages."

"O, nonsense. Don't talk that way," said Harriet, with slight embarrassment, and then hastened to change the subject. "Now let me tell you my great news. Who do you think is coming in a day or two?"

"I can't imagine, unless it is your brother."

"Exactly. How came you to guess it? Yes. Felix is on the briny even now, and may be expected to appear at any moment."

"How very nice for you. Your mother must be so glad."

"Yes; I really never wanted to see him so much before. He has been away almost three years. And he is a great sensation already. Now if you had not got married, think how you would have been delighted with his coming; the girls at the hotel are quite excited at the prospect you must know."

"I can imagine it," said Dorla, with a smile. "Well, the ranks are thinned by one. I am sorry I cannot be counted." But she did not look sorry, Harriet thought; and as she drove away she said to herself sagely, that it takes very little to please a woman with a sense of duty.

And Dorla, as she was left alone, reflected that if Harriet Varian were to come there often, she should persuade George to take her to some remoter wild, till the summer invasion was at an end and done.

**H**ARRIET VARIAN did come there, every day, for the next week; Dorla found she must get used to it, and George, to her amazement, appeared to like it very much. For she brought a great many people with her, talked incessantly about the beauty of the place, and made George feel of some importance. A very pleasant way to be made to feel. It seemed a very fine thing to him to have two or three carriages before the gate every afternoon, and to see fine ladies wandering over the yard and orchard, and to hear people in the village say they were getting to be very gay.

He begged Dorla to have a tea-party, and was chagrined

at her aversion. He wanted her to drive to the village every morning, and "to see something of people." He sent baskets of fruit to Mrs. Varian and Mrs. Bishop, and seemed inclined to assume the duty of showing hospitality to all Milford and its dependencies. Dorla sighed and resigned herself. This was not the way of making him happy that she had promised herself, but she supposed it was a good discipline for her, and that her feelings were selfish. "It was very easy to make him happy when it was only to do as I liked. Now I'll try to be as amiable when it comes to doing as I don't like."

At the end of a week a tea party had been forced upon her. "Only six or eight people to begin with, George. If we find it a success, it will be easy to have a larger one next week."

George was full of interest about it, Mrs. Rothermel was full of care and business about it, and Dorla tried to be interested and be patient. It was a fine clear summer morning, and when she had watered her poor pining little ferns, and the languishing rhododendron that she had transplanted from the hillside, she began to think that she had some preparations to make for the fete, and so she adjusted the parlor's toilet with many dainty little touches, and then went out into the garden and gathered an armful of roses and gay flowers and brought them in, putting them in a gorgeous heap upon a table before her, and then collecting all the empty vases and glasses, filled them with water, and set them on the table.

The parlor looked very pretty; the windows were open, and a little sunshine came in through the vines without and the muslin curtains within. Everything was so dainty and fair. She felt very young and happy, notwithstanding the impending tea-party; she sang a little as she filled the vases. At last there came a sound she did not love, the sound of Harriet Varian's voice, accompanied by other voices, and the stopping of a vehicle outside the gate.

"I shall not go," she said, as she heard her name called shrilly. "If she wants me, she will have to come in to see me. No doubt there is somebody new she wants me to ask to-night, but I shall not be imposed on. No one else shall come."

After a moment more of calling, Harriet was heard opening the gate and running down the path. Not waiting to knock, she ran into the hall, and dropping her glasses off her nose when she saw Dorla, she hurried up and kissed her. She was more out of breath than usual.

"Why didn't you come out," she said, with a little annoyance. "Quick! call George and get your things on, we're going to the Ramonskill for the morning, and we want you and George to get the pony carriage and go with us. Come, there is no time to lose."

"I can't go," said Dorla, "for George isn't here. Besides I go to the Ramonskill every day, and it isn't any novelty to me."

"Nonsense! It isn't to see the falls, but we've got a jolly party, and we'll have a good time. The Davises are here, and the Bishops, and that new girl from Boston. And besides, Felix has come, and I want to have you see him."

"No!" said Dorla, with interest. "Felix! Oh, how glad you must be about it."

"Yes, he's outside in the wagon with the others, and he promised to come in," she said, re-instating her glasses and peering out towards the gate. "I thought he was following me. He is so lazy." And she ran out and down the path to the great wagon, where three on a seat and closely packed, was gathered the beauty and chivalry of Milford.

"Felix," she said, sharply, "you ought to be ashamed. Why didn't you come when I asked you to? I don't know what she'll think of you."

"But she is coming with us, and it's so early to make a call," said Felix, not moving from his seat. He was sitting by the new girl from Boston, who was very clever and sufficiently pretty, and was amusing him.

"She isn't coming with us," exclaimed Harriet, impatiently. "And considering everything, it's the least you can do, to go in a moment and be introduced to her."

"Mr. Varian has never seen her, or he wouldn't need a second invitation," said Mr. Bishop from the driver's seat.

"It won't take you a moment. Come," urged Harriet, not giving up her ground.

"It will, it will take me five," said Felix, quite unmoved.

"Felix," remonstrated his sister in a lower tone, "I really am annoyed at this; you might at least be civil to my friends."

"That's always my intention, Harriet, but you have so many of them."

"Well, then you won't get an invitation for the tea to-night, and you will be the loser."

"O," cried the Boston girl with vigor, "go then, Mr. Varian, and we'll wait for you an hour. Go, for you must get an invitation for the tea to-night."

There was a chorus of assent to this, and Felix with a little grimace, got out of the carriage, and followed his sister deliberately up the path, across the threshold, and into the hall. Harriet plunged into the parlor in her headlong way, and Felix stood at the parlor door, and looked in. Dorla got up from the table with its heaps of flowers; she still had a branch or two of roses in her hand, and she came a little forward, looking bright and interested, yet somewhat shy. Felix said quietly to himself, as he looked at her, "It is the prettiest creature that I ever came across," but aloud he said some pleasant commonplace, and then began to rummage in his memory for all that his sister had told him of this one of her innumerable friends. The circumstances of her marriage came out gradually in his mind, like a half developed photograph, as he went on talking, and his curiosity became quite keen. So keen, that for a moment he forgot himself,

† Harriet had to say twice:

"Isn't it a pity, Felix; Dorla says she can not go with us to-day."

"A pity indeed. But surely, Mrs. Rothermel, you are not going to lose this beautiful day in the house."

"Why no, but Mr. Rothermel is not here, and I dare not drive myself, since a little accident that happened when I was driving alone last week."

"But mayn't I drive you?" he said quite eagerly, coming forward into the room.

"O, thank you," she returned with a little hesitation, "that would be breaking up the party."

"Not in the least. They will be glad of the extra room. The wagon is over-crowded. Mayn't we arrange it so?"

"Why yes," said Harriet, "that's the very thing. And we needn't wait for you. We'll go on, and you'll overtake us, for you'll drive so much faster than we do."

"But," said Dorla, blushing, "there's another thing; all the men are away on the farm, and there's nobody to harness Jenny."

"O, we can manage that I'm sure," said Felix, firmly. "If you'll only show me the way to the stable, Jenny shall be ready in a moment."

"As to that," said Dorla relenting, "I believe there *is* a boy down below the orchard, if we could only make him hear."

"I am sure we could, Mrs. Rothermel. Shall we go and try?"

"But about the others—they'll think it very rude."

"O, I'll make it all right. You come on as fast as you can," said Harriet, disappearing down the path.

The young Bostonian was bitterly chagrined; Felix had forgotten her clever existence, too much even to come back and apologise for his desertion. He reached down Dorla's hat from a peg in the hall, and followed her out into the orchard. It was the perfection of a summer morning, cool in the shade, warm in the sun, with a fresh breeze from th

west, and a sky without a cloud. They walked across the orchard, and then looked into the field beyond.

"I don't see him," said Dorla, "I'm afraid we've had our trouble for nothing."

"O, that would be hard indeed."

"Well, but it would, if you had to harness the pony."

"I like to harness ponies."

"But call, at any rate; maybe he's gone to sleep behind the bushes, somewhere."

"But what shall I call?"

"O, I forgot. Why, Tim's his name. Timothy McLaughlin if you want to be precise."

But no calling was of the least avail. Dorla sat down on the rocks, and Felix went to the furthest extremity of the orchard, and called in vain.

"You see it's only wasting time," he said, coming back to her. "The boy is hunting squirrels in the woods."

"That comes of having a farm bounded by such temptations," said the young mistress of it, getting up. "The cliffs on one side, and the river on the other. When a boy isn't fishing surreptitiously, he's hunting squirrels, as to-day. I never wanted Jenny harnessed yet, but there were two hours wasted in looking up a boy."

"You should learn to do it yourself, Mrs. Rothermel. Let me give you a lesson, No. 1, to-day."

"To tell you the truth I am—a little afraid of Jenny."

Felix didn't tell her so, but he thought it was lovely for a young woman to be afraid. It was a long while since he had seen one who was afraid of anything. The Bostonian was a distinguished whip.

"The fact is, Jenny kicks a little. And it's no pleasure to me now to drive, even when she goes quite quietly. I'm always thinking what she may possibly do next."

They went back across the shady orchard, and through the sunny garden, and paused at the steps of the porch.

"You will have to come with me," he said, "for I have



no idea where the pony's regalia is kept, and where the pony is herself."

"O, I will show you, only I cannot help you much, I am afraid. I don't know a great deal about the barn."

The barn-yard was by no means a model one—old wagons, old wheel-barrows, a precarious path to the barn-door; Dorla picked her way across with a little misgiving, but though her companion was the finest of fine gentlemen, she did not feel half the awe of him, that she would have felt of good-natured Mr. Bishop, or prim and tiresome Oliver. He went before her, and unfastened the great barn-door, which swung open, and then followed her in. The other doors were wide, and the whole place was sunny and nice smelling, though in anything but good order. The floor was strewn with hay, the bins that held the grain were open, and grain strewed the floor. Tim had done a little carpentering too; here were some squirrel traps half finished, and a saw and hammer and many things about. Harness hung around in all stages of decay, on all the posts and hooks; here was the pony's fine new silver-plate, and there was the old working leather of the oxen. On one side of the place stood a thrashing machine, dingy and dusty since last year's use; on the other stood the dainty little pony carriage, half covered with a sheet.

"Tim keeps the carriage here for his convenience," said Dorla, "though there is a carriage-house just across the yard. And here is Jenny. See how nice she is. Now *don't* you wish she didn't kick."

Jenny began a little winnowing when she saw her mistress, and put her head out over the stall, to which her mistress responded by patting her cautiously with her hand. "O, Mr. Varian, how will you manage it. See you will have to go out that door, and in there, and bring her round—do please be careful that she doesn't kick."

Mr. Varian laughed and promised to be careful, and dusted off a box and placed it on the opposite side under the

hayloft and invited Dorla to sit down. He proceeded to bring Jenny from her stall, and then Dorla said, "but where are her things?"

"Oh, there they are, see, against the door."

"Some of them," said Felix, laughing. "But not all. Tim must have some other favorite cranny for them. Let me see. Ah, here."

"Do you call that the head stall, Mr. Varian. What goes on first? Oh, now I see." And so on, till the pony was harnessed.

"Now, Mrs. Rothermel, do you think you could hold Jenny, while I uncover the carriage and turn it round."

"O, yes; but oughtn't you to have done that first?" said Dorla, critically. She tried to be very brave, but looked a little uneasy as she held the bridle.

"Do not be afraid," said her companion. "She won't be likely to kick with her head you know, and her heels are very remote at present."

Reassured, Dorla held Jenny's head, and watched him while he pulled the carriage out and shook out the cushions, and the rug, and forgot the pony's heels enough to think—"He is the handsomest man I ever saw. Yes, Harriet was quite right in all she said. A perfect Adonis. But so nice and pleasant. How glad I am he's come."

In a moment more, Jenny was led out, and all was ready. "There now, Mrs. Rothermel, you see how short a time it took to do all that: you will do it yourself after the next lesson, and I will sit and watch. Shall we shut the barn door, or leave it open and give Tim a fright?"

"Leave it open by all means, and please lead Jenny round to the front door and tie her there. O, I shall have to open the gate for you." So Dorla ran before and opened the gate, and then walked by Felix, while he led the pony to the post and tied him under the shade of the trees.

"I have to go in for my parasol and hat," she said. "Will you wait in the parlor for me?" He followed her

up the path and into the house, and then as she looked in at the parlor-door, she exclaimed, "O, the poor flowers, I quite forgot them! They will be withered, and there are no more in the garden. What shall I do about it? And I am to have a tea-party to-night."

"Yes, so I heard," said Felix. "And am I to be invited?"

"Oh, yes, I think so: On account of harnessing Jenny, I feel that it is owing to you. Yes, you shall be invited; dismiss all fears about it, and tell me what I shall do in the matter of these flowers?"

"Why, arrange them in water and I will help you. See," and he placed a chair for her and proceeded to pour water from the pitcher into the nearest vase.

"Oh, no," she cried, "there is no time. It would take me half an hour to arrange them as I want; no, you must put them all in water any way while I am putting on my hat, and then I will arrange them after I get back."

"Very well," he said, sitting down before his task and taking up the first flowers that came to hand. "I don't know a great deal about it, but I'll do my best." She looked back laughing as she reached the door and said, "the stems go in the water." Felix sat in a sort of maze, after she went out, with a half smile on his lips, and the unusual work did not proceed far in his hands. He put a few of the biggest flowers in the water in an awkward attitude, and then he put two or three roses in his buttonhole, and then he gave up the duty and walked around the room, and took up Dorla's books, and looked at her hand-writing on the fly-leaves, and took up her work-basket; and then examined all the pictures on the wall. And before he was quite satisfied about them all, Dorla came down with her hat and gloves on.

"The flowers," she said, disapprovingly. "Mr. Varian. Why didn't you do as you said you would?"

"O, Mrs. Rothermel, see what an expression those gerani-

ums have ! They do not satisfy me. I put them in the vase and they discouraged me. You must see I've no vocation. I did not think flowers could look so ugly."

"But you know it will save them from wilting all the same ! Well we might as well give up going, for it will be too late after I've put them all in water."

"O, by no means," cried Felix, with alacrity. "See, it will not take five minutes. I will hold your gloves, I will hand you the flowers, I will pour out the water. It is only for you to put them in the vases."

"But you will not understand," said Dorla, taking off her gloves and handing them to Felix, as she sat down by the table. "You will not understand that this is not their final disposition, this is not even dress rehearsal."

"But I am afraid it would break their spirit to be made to look like those ungainly things I put into the vase. I really was afraid of the effect upon them."

"I really am afraid of the effect upon Harriet and the others," said Dorla, adjusting the flowers that Felix handed to her. "It will be high noon before we reach the Ramonskill, and if they have waited for us they will be anything but amiable."

"They will have no reason to complain," said Felix. "For this is a party made up with the sole object of showing me the Ramonskill, all the rest have seen it ; and if I am satisfied to come back without seeing it, no one is concerned in it but me."

"O, Mr. Varian, this makes it even worse ! A party for your pleasure, and you kept away by me ! Let us hurry. I shall never be forgiven. There, those geranium leaves must go, I can get plenty more of them. And those verbenas ! Ah, I haven't time. But here, you shall have this for your good intentions." And she broke off a little spray of sweet verberna, and gave it to him for his button-hole, at the same time fastening a piece of it into her dress. Then tying a veil on, and putting on her gloves, which

. . .

Felix gave her singly, as they went out, she led the way down to the gate. Felix put her in the carriage, and arranged the skirts of her pretty cambric dress, so that it should not touch the wheel, and then took his place beside her. A very light-hearted and happy pair, they bowled away. The summer morning was beautiful to them. Life at that moment a happy holiday affair. People called Felix a little blasé; he did not look so now. They said young Mrs. Rothermel was too shy and too distraite to be absolutely pleasing. No one could say that of her to-day.

It was a lovely drive along the river. Felix never forgot it; it always came back to him in a glow of sunshine and verdant beauty. The broad valley before them was laughing with corn; the cliffs above them were dark and green. They quite forgot they ought to hurry. Dorla saw some of her beloved ferns high up on some rocks beside the road, and Felix scrambled up to get them. While the road was even and hard, as it was along the river, they drove on rapidly with the soft wind in their faces; but when they turned off, up the hill, they loitered and drove very leisurely. The hill was so steep, Felix got out and walked beside the little carriage, tenderly mindful of the interests of Jenny. There is a nice little view at one point, where you look over a mile of tree-tops, with a faint blue mountain glimpse beyond; that they stopped and talked about. And Dorla told Felix why she liked it, though she had driven past it fifty times at least, and had never before felt that she wanted to talk to any one about it. And Felix, though it was but a month since he left Switzerland, felt in it a charm that all that land had lacked. The hill was steep, and though they were not in a hurry, at last the top was reached, and they turned into the grove where the horses are tied, and the wagons left on the way down to the falls.

"The wagon is not here," said Dorla, in a little consternation, hesitating to get out. "Where can they have gone?"

"Perhaps they have left the wagon somewhere else,"

urged Felix, insisting upon her getting out, "we shall find them at the falls."

"But they always tie the horses here," said Dorla. "It is the only place. I think it would be better to go back, I am afraid they did not like it."

"Depend upon it they are down below. Besides, being here, are we not wise to see the falls? It's no novelty to you, but you know I've never seen them."

So Jenny was tied to a tree, and they started down the steep path through the woods. Half way down they found a piece of paper pinned upon a tree, informing them that the party had grown tired of waiting longer, and had gone home by the Brewery. It was a testy little document, signed by all the party excepting the young Boston woman, who disdained the pleasantry. Dorla was annoyed, and wanted to go back.

"Now see," said Felix, "how foolish that would be, we cannot overtake them, we are within five minutes of the falls, and shall lose a pleasant walk by turning back because they badgered us." So Dorla yielded, and they *would* have lost a pleasant walk by going back. Having dismissed the spectre of the waiting party, they gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the moment. They went over the falls and under the falls; they followed the stream down farther than Dorla had ever followed it before; they found a hundred charming spots that she had never seen before. It was so cool and sprayey and musical down below the rocks; being high noon now, the cool and the spray were welcome; they could not talk much the water made such a noise. It was a very steep path to get up again, and very slippery, for the ground was covered with pine needles; but Felix had cut a stick for Dorla, and with that, and his hand at the worst places, she reached the plateau opposite the fall, and there they sat and rested. "And that is the bridal veil, undoubtedly," said Felix.

"I wonder if there ever were falls that hadn't a faint

little misty one that they called the bridal veil?" said Dorla.

"Co-extensive with human discovery. A misty, chilly phenomenon loveliest in the distance."

"Oh, no!" said Dorla with a little hesitation.

"Well, you have recent and reliable experience. I can only speculate," said her companion with a little shrug, at the same time he glanced quickly at her. She was silent and he saw a faint clouding of her face, a weary commonplace look, as if the world were not so brilliant and gay after all; in truth she was thinking of the incongruous, dull wedding party, and of the smell of fried oysters, and of the racket of the omnibuses and carriages past the house, on that day not two months past, when she had worn the chilly, misty phenomenon of which her companion spoke; she did not think at all about George, or about anything but the externals of that dull occasion. Felix did not understand exactly, but he thought it was best to talk about something else at once, and the cloud passed away at the first word.

All this took time—the rocks, and the climbing, and the resting; Dorla gave a little scream of horror when she saw the hour. "Two o'clock! why, dinner is over and done in every house in Milford! 'Whatever' shall we do?"

"How material!" exclaimed Felix. "Are you so hungry then? For my part I had not thought of dinner."

"But you ought to have thought of it, and so ought I; poor dear old Mrs. Rothermel! she will be so unhappy."

All this while Dorla was hurrying up the bank, quite out of breath; but had to stop and rest and acknowledge she was tired. She looked very pretty, standing with her hand on her heart, her hat fallen back, her cheeks flushed, and panting for breath.

"See how you have tired yourself, and how absurd it is," said her companion. "Probably no one has thought about us since we've been away."

He took off his straw hat, and leaning with one hand

against a tree, fanned her with it with the other. His cheeks were little flushed too with the exercise, but he did not look tired.

They left "the woods so sweet with birch and fern," and seated once more in the little carriage, drove towards home. It was a very short drive after all, if one chose to make it so. When they reached the gate of the farm house, Dorla said with candor, "Dinner is never a very state affair with us, and less than ever to-day, I suppose, owing to the tea-party. But you will find it better than no dinner at all, or a cold one at the hotel; so please come in and take it with me, the others will all have eaten theirs."

That was a strong temptation; and she presented to his fancy a tête-à-tête broiled chicken, some fresh vegetables and a glass of claret; possibly some whipped-cream and fruit. But he had a good deal of tact, and he did not want to see her wearied, and to be associated in her thoughts with anything *mal à propos* or uncomfortable. He said he dared not provoke Harriet any further; he must go and be reconciled to her, or she would forbid his coming to the tea that evening. "But you will take the pony," she said, as he tied her to the post. "Tim shall go down and bring her back. Please, you surely would not walk all that distance in the sun."

He laughed, and said he should have to show her some notes of his walking tour last summer. Then lifting his hat he said good-bye, and she watched him from the porch as he walked rapidly down the road. O, what a happy morning! She went singing into the house; she laughed aloud when she saw the gaunt geraniums in their glass alone, and picked up with interest some roses that he had handed her, and she had dropped upon the floor. She threw her arms around her mother-in-law with unusual effusion, and begged her to forgive her for being so late, and ate her little dinner all alone, as if she enjoyed it thoroughly. The tea-party became an interest and an excitement; she entered into the



preparations for it keenly, arranging the flowers and the candles on the tables with her own hands, and giving the servant many close instructions on the matter of her duty. She forgot all about poor George, and nearly ran over him in the hall, when she was coming down stairs with her arms full of table linen. He was delighted to see she was no longer a martyr, and tried to help her in every way she would permit.

"Tell me about this Varian," he said, standing by her and holding the steps, while she put some ferns over a picture.

"Oh, he's delightful!" she said, "so clever, so handsome and so—so—easy to get acquainted with;" for she began to think she had only been with him three hours and a half, and yet he seemed more of a friend to her than people she had known all her life, therefore it must be his characteristic that he was easy to get acquainted with.

"A good deal of a swell, though, I've no doubt," said George, for he felt provincial, in prospect of meeting this travelled creature.

"On the contrary," said Dorla, "he is most unpretending; he doesn't seem to be thinking of himself at all, but of the person to whom he talks, and he doesn't say anything about the places he has been to—that tiresome way! Oh, I know you will like him; I never liked anybody half so well in all my life before in such a little time."

George shook his head; he did not feel her confidence. Then she went to her room and tried to sleep a little while; but it was not much use to try to sleep; she was in a dazzling gay dream whether she slept or waked. When she was dressed and ready to go down stairs, George came to the door and knocked. He had been afraid to disturb her before, and he was not yet dressed himself. He told her she looked lovely, and asked her to give him a kiss; she gave it to him absent-mindedly and amiably, thinking, meanwhile, whether the hall would be light enough with the lamp, or

whether she had better not have candles too: George was not dissatisfied, and went in to make his toilet in great content of spirit. Dorla went to her mother-in-law's room, with some lace in her hand. That dear old lady was nervous about her appearance; she knew the tea was nice, but she was not so sure about herself.

"Now you look just as I want you to!" cried Dorla caressingly. "I am so glad! Wait one moment; you must wear this lace to please me. Your cap is quite perfect, pray believe me."

She had had a handsome black silk dress made in honor of George's wedding (though she did not go to it), and that, and the fine lace, and the pretty cap, made her sweet old face quite picturesque. Still she *was* nervous, and that disturbed Dorla a little. She hoped George would not be ill at ease. It was so underbred to be so. In a little while he called her up-stairs again, to tie his cravat for him, and to tell him if he were "all right." She felt a little contempt for him, for she knew he was afraid of the criticism of "that Varian;" and she gave him the kiss he asked for rather less cheerfully than at first.

"Now, I do beg," she said, a little less gently than usual, "I do beg you won't be worried about things. Everything is well arranged, and will be nice. Leave it all to me, and try to act as if you were in somebody else's house."

Easy advice to give, but very hard to put in practice; and poor George wandered about the rooms with a troubled face, every few moments coming back to Dorla to tell her of his conviction that the dining-room would not be light enough, or that the parlor lamp would smoke.

"I've thought of all that, George," she said; "You needn't be afraid. It is all right." This was her house, this was the hour of her reign. She felt herself quite capable of doing her part well. It was an excitement and a pleasure that she had never felt before. She had made up her mind just how her guests should be entertained, just

what every one should do ; and she did not feel at all afraid of any of them, at least, while they were in the house.

There was nothing more that she could possibly do, so she sat down quietly in the porch to wait for them. About half-past seven o'clock, the guests arrived (they could not be said to assemble, for they came in one great wagon, which was the Milford fashion). All but Mr. Varian. Dorla felt a pang of disappointment when amid the crowd who came in at the same time, she did not see him. But Harriet relieved her mind.

"Felix preferred to walk," she said. "He will soon be here, no doubt." Then the ladies all went up to Dorla's room, and Dorla entertained the gentlemen upon the porch. The evening was lovely. The sunset was still reflected in the valley before them, but the tall cliffs behind the house made it all in shadow. "It is pleasanter outside," said Dorla, "is it not?" So they all stayed outside, where there were plenty of seats about the grass. Presently the ladies came down, and then she presented them to Mrs. Rothermel, and then she made her sit down in the porch, and kind, discriminating Mrs. Bishop sat beside her and talked to her, and Dorla was free to walk about among the others. George was talking to some one quite placidly, but she saw that he was thoroughly uncomfortable. The Boston young woman, whose name was Grayson, was keenly watching her. The Davises, who had never seen her with her husband, were as curiously wistful as well-bred people can be. Oliver was there, and never took his eyes off her ; she saw it all. Presently, Harriet, who had been hovering about the gate and looking down the road, said "There's Felix," and at the same moment, Felix entered upon the scene. Dorla went forward a step or two in a natural, bright manner, and welcomed him, and saying quickly, "I want to present you to Mrs. Rothermel," led him up to the porch. That little ceremony shortly over, she said "George," and moved towards him. He came, looking unmistakably ill at ease.

"I want to introduce you to Mr. Varian." She tried not to feel that Felix was criticising him. After a few words she turned and left them, and asked Miss Grayson to come and see some rhododendron that she had transplanted from the woods. And after five minutes, when they came back across the grass, she had the happiness of seeing George and Felix apparently on the best terms, George quite at ease, and looking infinitely relieved. "I knew he would like him," she said to herself. "Everybody does. Who could help it!" But aloud she said, "O, Miss Grayson, I have done wrong to bring you on the grass; it is damp already, and you are wearing slippers. We will keep to straight paths in the future. Let us take Mr. Davis, and go and see my rabbits; by that time, I am sure it will be time for tea."

Harriet and Oliver were exploring the orchard; all were sauntering about as they felt disposed. When they were summoned in to tea, it was quite twilight, and the bright lights of the house were welcome. The parlor was really very pretty, with its ferns and flowers and soft wax lights. They passed through this, into the dining-room. Every one was hungry, the things to eat delicious, the table extremely pretty. Dorla was perfectly satisfied, as she knew she should be. Her mother-in-law was fully occupied behind the tea-things, and overcame her trepidation. George had concluded to take his wife's advice, apparently, and forgot to be anxious, and became a little important instead, which suited the occasion better. Dorla was seated between old Mr. Davis and Mr. Bishop, while opposite were Felix and his friend, Miss Grayson. Dorla was so much prettier than any body else! No one could help noticing the difference. She was dressed in white, with a broad scarlet sash, and scarlet geraniums in her hair; the very ones Felix believed that had looked so ungainly when he put them in great branches in the vase. She was twice as lovely as ever she had been last year, thought poor old-bachelory Oliver, and he could have gnashed his teeth if nobody had been looking. As it

was, he was doubly devoted to Miss Davis, who liked it very much and did not divine the cause. In the *mélée* that followed their leaving the dining-room, Felix contrived to speak a word or two to Mrs. Rothermel, but only a word or two.

"Collect Mrs. Bishop and Mrs. Varian for me," she said, "I want them to play whist."

Then she herself went to collect Mr. Bishop and Mr. Davis *père*, and George brought the whist table, and in half an hour after tea, these four were comfortably playing their beloved game. The younger people were scattered about the parlor and hall; Miss Grayson and Felix were on the porch. Bye and bye they had some music. Miss Grayson came in and played, and Oliver sang some songs. Miss Grayson played quite remarkably; it made everything else seem crude. She was quite willing to stay at the piano, with the consciousness that she was giving pleasure and excelling every one at the same time. Felix was fond of music and he stayed beside her for a long while. At last she said she had heard that Mr. Rothermel sang; she must insist that he sing something for them. Mrs. Rothermel was called upon to play his accompaniments. No; for that Mrs. Rothermel was too wise.

"I play them so badly, that it would spoil the songs for every one, most of all for you, Miss Grayson. He shall take his guitar and go out in the moonlight, troubadour-fashion, and sing to us from the porch. Please, George, do that; it will sound so much better than if I play for you."

And while George obeyed, she said with a little laugh, "then we can listen or not as we feel inclined."

It was very well done; the songs did sound much better in that informal way, and disarmed criticism; besides, he sang twice as well, being from under the bright lights, and the sharp eyes of a roomfull of people. Harriet was outside with him, Miss Davis and Mr. Oliver also. Miss Grayson and young Davis sat in the window. The moonlight

was beautiful, and the air sweet with flowers. Felix came across to the sofa where Dorla sat alone.

"You do not really play well?" he said, taking a chair beside her.

"Infamously. Sometime I will play for you, when no one else is here, that you may know I speak the truth."

"Then you do not care about my opinion, that is clear, as much as for these people to whom you will not play to-night."

"Well, not in the same way, certainly. It is true, I believe, I would rather you knew I played badly, than Miss Grayson, or any of the rest; in fact, I don't mind you knowing it at all."

"That is a doubtful sort of confidence. Am I to be flattered by it?"

"Well, that is impossible for me to say, for I have never thought about it before. I only tell you the facts as I find them in my mind."

"I shall try to interpret them favorably to myself. Now I am going to pay *you* a compliment."

"Are you? Oh, how pleasant. I am listening."

"Very well. There is no ambiguity about my facts. I think you very clever, and I find you play most skilfully upon one instrument, if not upon the one Miss Grayson does."

"And what is it pray? For I cannot guess."

"Why, the instrument that one might call Society—whatever part of it comes under your hand. You have a gift, believe me. I have watched you to-night with wonder. See how you have made every one do what you wanted. I almost think you've regulated the cards my mother has held; but of course I can't be sure of that! At any rate, you've put her with her back to the light, which always makes her happy, and given her a good partner, which ensures success. And put a screen behind Mrs. Bishop's back, to relieve her mind from fear of draughts. And given Miss Davis permission to sit in the moonlight with Mr. Oliver. And made

Miss Grayson's talent give everybody pleasure, beginning with herself. Besides asking your mother-in-law to wind those skeins of worsted for you (which you didn't want), to make her feel occupied and amused among the younger and gayer people. Yes, Mrs. Rothermel. We are your gamut, and upon us you play."

"Oh," said Dorla, laughing, "that may be true. But if it is, I must tell you this, that you are the only irresponsible note, so far, to-night. I have struck you three times, three times I'm sure, and not a sound elicited. For, once, I wanted you to urge Miss Grayson to play again, and you did not take the hint. And another time, I wanted you to make Harriet stop teasing Mr. Oliver; and the third, I wanted you to come and talk to me, for I was very tired of being pleasant to people that I did not care about."

And she gave him a smile so bright, so innocent, so full of nameless flattery, that it looked like the perfection of art. It had the effect upon Felix of making him silent for a moment; of almost taking away his breath. When he spoke again it was in a lower tone, almost a smothered one. He really did not understand her and he wanted to.

"And how did you learn all this," he said. "I thought from Harriet's account you were a sort of nun, and knew nothing of the world."

"Oh, to begin with, I beg you will discredit all Harriet's judgments of me. You and I know her too well to make it necessary to call her discrimination her strong point."

"Yes. I admit she makes great mistakes in judgment. But I am only talking about her facts in this present case."

"Ah, facts! They are such tiresome things. I feel to-night as if there were no facts worth noticing besides moonlight and Beethoven."

"Then you do not mean to tell me how you learned to be so clever and to manage people so?"

"No, I'd rather you'd think it a gift as you said before. We don't learn gifts."

"No, but we begin to use them."

"Well, I am beginning. To tell you the truth, this is my first essay. Harriet was right, I never had a chance before, nor felt the inclination."

"I wonder whether Harriet was right about another thing she said. Will you tell me if I ask you?"

"Oh, I cannot promise," said Dorla, looking frightened. "Harriet says so many random things."

"Yes, I know; but I don't think this was a random thing she said. You can answer it, and I'm sure you will. She said you were a sort of nun, not only from want of experience of the world, but from choice and deliberation. Is it so? I want you to tell me; really, I have a reason for wanting to know." The color came into her face, and she sat looking down, but not as if she were going to answer.

"Why? Cannot you even speak of such things to me, Mrs. Rothermel? Am I such a sinner? Well, perhaps I am, and perhaps I have not a right to talk about this to you; but I confess I *have* a longing to know if there do live women who—well—there is no use in talking of it. I have been in a bad school. My mother and Harriet don't help me much by their example. I know them to be good and excellent in their way, but it's such a very worldly way!—It's unreasonable to ask people to govern themselves by higher rules, but somehow, you'd like to know that there were a few that did it, just for the exaltation of sentiment it would give you."

"Felix!" cried his mother.

"Mr. Varian!" cried Mr. Bishop. "Come here, we have agreed to leave it to you. If you know your adversary holds a short suit, are you justified, etc., etc., etc."

Felix went over with reluctant steps to the card table, and Dorla sat silent and thoughtful with her eyes upon the floor. It was impossible for Felix to come back to her, for before the whist difficulty had approached solution, Mr. Oliver had come in and taken his place beside her, and



there had arisen a noisy consultation about the doings of the morrow, in which everybody talked at once; Dorla alone was silent. She was thinking, not about the picnic, but about Felix, and how sorry she was for him, and how she longed to talk to him about "such things," but did not dare to speak! Whatever he might lack, she was sure it was not his fault, *quite* sure. When next she heard his voice, it was not gay and noisy like the rest, but subdued and quiet, just as it ought to have been, after the way he had begun to talk when he sat beside her, and he seemed quite indifferent about the picnic, which was such a matter of interest to all the rest. Where it should be, how it should be, what hour they had better start. What a tumult about nothing, or very nearly nothing. At last it was settled—the hour, the edibles, the conveyances; and it was time to go.

At the last moment, George remembered he had some business that could not be put off that would take him to Port Jervis in the morning. But Dorla mustn't lose it. "Dorla, couldn't you drive yourself? Such a coward as you've got to be. Well, Mr. Varian, maybe you won't mind driving her again to-morrow. We'll see that Tim's on hand to harness Jenny up."

Mr. Varian would be very glad to do it; and Miss Grayson set her lips together, and Miss Davis shrugged her shoulders, and said to Mr. Oliver aside, it was such bad taste to break up the party in that way. It was against all Milford precedent to go in pony carriages to picnics or gregarious undertakings. Then they all said good-bye in the moonlight; the older people drove home in the big wagon waiting at the gate, and five of the younger ones started off to walk.

**T**HE next morning, the baskets that the dear old mother had been arranging stood on the dining-room table. Dorla was on her knees, packing some bottles in a pail of ice, when she heard Felix come in at the front door. She had been listening for him without knowing it, since breakfast-time. She started up, and ran out into the parlor. "O, come in," she said, "and tell me if this is not the best plan. To let Tim take these baskets to the woods for us, with one of the farm horses, and then let him stay and build the fire, and get some wood together, and make a sort of table. Picnics are so tiresome when you have to do everything yourself; and besides, I am sure all these things could never be got into the pony carriage."

Felix thought they certainly could not, and that Tim would be an acquisition.

"And then," he said, "don't you think we had better start at once, and have no possible complaint about our keeping anybody waiting? I see Jenny has 'her things' on, as you'd say, and it will not take you very long to put on yours."

"Oh, not five minutes," said she. And in eight minutes they were off, Tim being charged with the safe conduct of the baskets, and Mrs. Rothermel giving herself up to the safe starting of Tim.

It was such a day as yesterday, only a little warmer; the wind in your face was softer and more velvety; you did not want to drive so fast, or to walk with such determination, and you chose the shade. Still, it was not a hot day; it was just perfect summer weather. When they reached the Conneshaugh, there was no token of the picnickers. They turned off from the wood road, into an unfrequented wagon track that led to the little valley. The boughs caught Dorla's veil, and grated upon the top of Felix's straw hat. They went down with a thump into the dry bed of a stream, and

Dorla uttered a little scream and looked with solicitude at Jenny.

"How are the others to get through here," she said, with some anxiety.

"Perhaps they are braver," answered her companion.

"However that may be, they have higher carriages, and that is more important than their moral qualities."

"When Tim comes, I will get his axe and cut down some of the branches; that will remedy the carriage difficulty."

"And take his spade and fill up the bed of that brook? That will perhaps assist the courage of my successors."

"Well you see I did not tell him to bring a spade, I only advised an axe, dealing with material facts, and not with moral qualities."

The valley was cool and lovely. It was now past noon, and the shadows were already stretching across it. It lay, a grassy plateau, surrounded on all sides by tall forest trees, the hill rising steeply from it; a pretty little stream ran through it; the grass was green and smooth as a pleasure ground. Felix and Dorla selected the best spot for the table, arranged some logs for seats, picked two or three big leaves full of raspberries, washed their stained hands in the cool brook, and then sat down to wait.

"He cometh not," she said.

"She cometh not," he said. "And that refers to Miss Grayson let me say at once."

"O, I knew it," said Dorla. "You need not have said. I knew you did not mean Mrs. Bishop."

"Well now, to tell you the truth, I do not believe they will be here for an hour. I felt very much discouraged when I left them. They were not half ready, and in such confusion; two or three people out of temper and everything chaotic."

"Then why did we start so soon ourselves?"

"Why? O, why I thought it was best to have to tell them we had waited for them much longer than they had

done yesterday for us. And I thought the woods were so cool and fresh."

"Yes, they are. And the drive along the river must have been warm if we had left it later."

"And now what shall we do?" said Felix. "For I am tired of picking raspberries."

"I know of a lovely drive," said Dorla, "all through the woods. But the hill is very steep indeed."

"Let us try it," said Felix, taking Jenny by the head and turning her. In his heart, he thought the party would soon be there, and he thought it would be much pleasanter to escape their arrival and the babble and confusion of the preparations for the feast. As they reached the road again, they encountered Tim, and told him where to build the table and make the fire, and charged him to be careful of the baskets, and to tell the ladies and gentlemen when they came, that they had been waiting for them for an hour, and had gone off to take a drive.

The road "all through the woods" was beautiful and cool. They gathered laurels and ferns, and walked up the steepest parts of the hill, and went to a farm-house and got a drink, and rested for a little while; and then Dorla thought it was time to go back to the valley. But Felix thought it was so dull going back the same road; she had told him of one a little longer that took them around the hill, and that brought you to such a *pretty* view. Felix did really like "pretty views" very much. It would only take them a little longer, and they had better, he was certain, go that way.

"Only, it seems a little as if we were shirking the trouble of getting the lunch ready and unpacking the baskets," said Dorla, with some hesitation.

"Isn't it a pity to care too much how things look, when we are sure our motives are right?" said Felix, gravely. And then Dorla laughed, and he took up the reins and went the way he wanted to go. What did they talk about all

that long drive through the woods and across the hill tops? Not of music—not of books—a little of the nature before them, and a good deal of themselves. It really seemed very little to remember, and yet how well they felt they knew each other, before the drive was over.

"O, go quickly," said Dorla, as they entered the Conneshaugh woods again and were turning into the valley. "I really am afraid. I think we have been very rude."

"So do I," said Felix. "But it was not my fault. I did not want to go, you know."

"O, of course not," cried Dorla. "That always is the way."

"I fear we shall not be popular," said Felix, drawing in the reins, and peering through the trees upon the picnic party. "Look! There is poor Oliver with a face of carnation. He is set to tend the fire. The heat must be really apoplectic. And old Bishop! He has actually had to take his coat off, carrying those loads of wood."

"Why didn't they let Tim do all that," said Dorla faintly, looking on with anxiety.

"Tim is hunting squirrels, I haven't any doubt. And see! O, Mrs. Rothermel, will you ever dare go in! Even good Mrs. Bishop's energies are at low water mark; dear faithful creature, she is fanning herself on a log, and cutting bread at intervals. What thick slices! How I detest the sight. She needn't ask me to have any."

"I don't believe she will."

"And Harriet is in a rage with somebody. O, I see. It's with Mrs. Whymples. They've been making rival *mayonnaise*, and Mrs. Whymples has appropriated all the eggs. That is hard lines. I don't wonder Harriet is furious. She never made anything that was good but *mayonnaise*, and it will be great trash without a single egg. I shall have to take some of Mrs. Whymples's."

"I doubt whether she will give you any."

"O, yes she will. And I promise you shall have some too."

"Then you will have to be attentive to one of the two daughters."

"Well, I can do that, if your salad depends upon it. Ah, there is the best looking one, helping Davis make the coffee. Bah! What stuff it will be. I really wish they had waited till I came for that. I was willing to make the coffee."

"Then your face would have been vermillion, like Mr. Davis, and you would have had to roll your coat sleeves up almost to the elbow as he had to do."

"But the coffee would have been fit to drink."

"You should have thought of that before. But now please let us go."

They drove on, into the opening, with some misgivings; and Dorla, getting out of the little carriage, went on alone towards the group, leaving Felix to fasten Jenny to the nearest tree. She was greeted rather coldly, as was entirely natural. In fact, no one was in the humor for raillery. It was an hour past dinner-time, and it was an inferior dinner for which they could hope at last.

"Can I do anything," said Dorla, timidly, going up to the table, as she took off her gloves.

"You might have done something if you had been here an hour ago," said Harriet, sharply, from over a fluid-compound which refused to thicken. "But it's just like Felix, always getting out of the way of work. He will do three times as much as the thing itself would be, to get away from any piece of work that threatens him. I know he went to Europe once to get rid of selling the carriage horses that had got too old. He is the prince of loafers. I can tell you that if you haven't found it out."

"Wait till he comes where he can hear you. It's a pity to waste it all on us," said Dorla, coldly. "Have you unpacked the baskets that I brought?"

No. Harriet had not known that there were any. Felix must be sent to look for them at once. Then Felix came up, and was in such a beautiful good-humor, every one grew better tempered. The baskets from the Rothermels were full of treasures, and that had a mollifying influence. The coffee began to throw out delicious odors, and there was no reason that dinner should not be eaten without further waiting.

After awhile, "be advised by me," said Felix, *sotto voce*, to Mrs. Bishop. "You are very tired. Come and sit over there in Mrs. Rothermel's little carriage, and I will bring your lunch to you."

Mrs. Bishop consented and followed him to the shady spot, some distance removed from the others, where the carriage stood, detached from the pony, who was tied beyond. It gave her a very comfortable seat.

"O, such a blessing after that hard log!" she exclaimed, "And now why can't you bring some one else to share it with me. Tell Mrs. Rothermel. She is not very strong. She is looking a little tired."

"A happy thought," said Felix; and as he went across to the group to ask her, Mrs. Bishop smiled amiably, and wondered whether he thought she did not understand. Soon Dorla came back with him, looking bright and not at all tired now. She sat in the carriage beside Mrs. Bishop, and gave Felix the rug for himself on the grass. Tim having exhausted the pleasures of the chase, and feeling that dinner-time was near, had returned, and was of service in bringing them hot cups of coffee from the rather distant fire, and doing other tiresome things. Though to do Felix justice, he showed none of that aversion to being useful of which his sister had accused him. Still it made it pleasanter to have Tim to call upon. They were just far enough from the table and the people not to be disturbed by their noise and chatter, and yet near enough to hear faintly the sound of laughing, and to see them as in a pantomime. It

made quite a gay and pretty scene. The three in the pony carriage had a very nice lunch. Felix had secured all that was nicest to bring over there, and there were two or three surreptitious bottles of champagne which he had put in his sister's basket in the morning, of which one was appropriated to their use.

"Is not this selfish, but so pleasant," said Dorla to Mrs. Bishop, as they finished their most comfortable meal.

"Yes, I am quite ashamed of it, but I've enjoyed it all the same."

"I don't think," said Felix, as he lay on the rug upon the grass and smoked an unspeakable cigar, "I don't think that I ever want to be any nearer to a crowd of people than I am at present. I am not gregarious."

"Do you know," said Dorla, "that was the first thing I ever heard about you. Your sister told me you hated crowds and liked the woods, and I always remembered it about you."

"How long ago was that," asked Felix, "that Harriet told you anything about me?"

"It was more than a year ago—a year ago last week. Harriet is very fond of you when you are away."

"We live like angels forty miles apart." And Felix sighed a little; he would have been very glad if Harriet would have done exactly as he wished. It never occurred to him that she had any reason to be dissatisfied. Dorla sympathised with him deeply, but did not want to hear him speak about it lightly, and in the presence of another person. So she said:

"What a pretty picture they make, over there by the fire—a real gypsy fire, crooked sticks, black pot and all; and Miss Grayson and Miss Whymples with their dark eyes and red skirts are just what they ought to be. I neglected my duty in wearing a white cambric dress to-day."

"Neglect it always," said Felix, looking at her for a moment.



"But at a picnic one owes a duty to the picturesque," said Mrs. Bishop, following Dorla's eyes. "Look at Miss Davis with the field flowers in her hat, and its long black velvet ribbons. Those poppies are a 'sweet boon.'"

"At a distance of forty rods, they are," said Felix. "Nearer they have a look of cheap decoration; a little suggestion of upholstery."

"That is the reason he stays here, Mrs. Bishop! Just a question of effect. If we wore black and red, with muslin flowers, we should be studied at a distance, too. We must be careful in the matter of costume."

"I am careful, always," said Mrs. Bishop, looking down complacently at her shabby gray stuff dress. "Who could find any fault with this? I have the voice of all the past in its favor; it has passed through much festivity and has never been accused of scenic effect. You are always safe in a gray mohair."

Dorla and Felix laughed; such a light-hearted, merry laugh, Mrs. Bishop quite enjoyed it.

"Dear Mrs. Bishop, I like you better than anybody in the world," said Dorla, putting some ferns in the battered old 'sundown' that that lady wore.

"Thank you, my dear," she returned, and though not given to caressing, she passed her hand affectionately over Dorla's pretty cheek. Dorla felt the look of admiration and the touch of affection, and they brightened for her the already bright hour.

"Do you know," she said, making up the rest of the ferns into a *bouquet de corsage* for herself. "Do you know, I never really enjoyed a picnic before; this has been perfect; the ideal picnic. I am not tired or bored, and I have been tired and bored before always."

"What has made it different," said Mrs. Bishop, looking at her curiously. "Because there was champagne? or was the coffee hotter than at other times?"

"It can't be the champagne entirely," said Dorla. "For

we had it last year more than once. (O, that maiden-hair I've dropped. Thank you, Mr. Varian.) And the coffee was excellent that horrid day we spent at Dingman's just before we went away. No. Maybe it's the weather. It is such a perfect day."

"Eighty-two in the shade, I'm sure, my dear. It must be ninety in the open road. Really, it cannot be the weather."

"Well, I don't know what it is. Only *I* don't think it is too warm. I love a thorough summer day."

"And it's dusty too. You have forgotten that."

"Dusty! Why, dear Mrs. Bishop, if it were ever so dusty we couldn't feel it in here. I am sure the dew never leaves the grass in this deep glade."

"Well that accounts for it. I didn't know why I felt the heat so much. Damp heat is so much harder to bear than dry heat."

"You are determined to find fault."

"And I am sure there are mosquitoes."

"Mrs. Bishop! Now that's unjust; the last thing to accuse poor Milford of. I don't believe you could get one if you advertised for it in the Milford Herald. It would be easier to get a bald eagle or a golden pheasant. I do like people to be just."

"That is always what I aim to be, my child, and I am only trying to make you see that this picnic is not any better than ordinary picnics. I am trying to make you take the middle-aged view of it."

"But I am not middle-aged," said Dorla, plaintively, "how can I."

"That is true; and that is what I want to bring you to. It isn't the picnic nor the day that is so delightful. It is you; and it is you because you're young."

"O, but I was younger last year; and things were not so delightful." Mrs. Bishop shrugged her middle-aged should-

ers, and turned to Felix, who lay silent on the grass, smoking and gazing into space.

"Help us, Mr. Varian, don't you see how far we are from shore?"

"You should have been more careful," he said. "It is easier sometimes to get out to sea than to get back to land."

"But throw me an oar in charity. Why is to-day's picnic so much better than other day's picnics? Mrs. Rothermel is a year older—"

"Perhaps that's the reason," he said, rather abruptly. "Mrs. Rothermel is just learning to enjoy herself."

"At that rate," cried Mrs. Bishop, "how happy I should be."

"What is the use," exclaimed Felix, "of trying to analyze one's happiness. Finding out what it's made of doesn't help you to get it up again. You may be pretty sure of one thing—what you enjoy to-day, you won't enjoy to-morrow. Either it won't come to you again, or you won't want it if it does come."

"O, dismal!" cried Dorla, stopping her ears. "I mean to enjoy every day this summer as I've enjoyed to-day, and to think every picnic nicer than the one before."

"May it be so!" said Felix, who seemed to have a ghost of discontent flitting around him at the moment.

"It is really disheartening," said Dorla, making a *boutonnière* for him out of the tiniest of the ferns and a single wild rose. "I do not think you have enjoyed yourself at all. Here is a flower for you. I hope it will make you happier." She tossed the little spray out to him, and it fell upon the ground beside him. He picked it up and put it in his coat.

"I did not say I had not enjoyed myself," he said, in rather a low voice. "But this does make me happier."

He had almost forgotten Mrs. Bishop, but she, good soul, had not forgotten him. She quite enjoyed them both. She had been very faithful to her Bishop for all the twenty-five

years that she had been married to him, for she had never seen anybody that she liked half so well, and hadn't, in fact, had much temptation. But she had very liberal ideas, and thought that a pretty young married woman had every right to her little romances, if she found amusement in them. She thought that Felix was very decidedly in love, which circumstance pleased her, for two reasons; the first, that he was a man of the world, and it "served him right." The second, that Dorla was a sweet wild rose, whom she approved; and that the greedy young women to whom Felix was an aspiration, were not sweet wild roses in any sense, and she was rather glad to see them overthrown. She did not quite understand Dorla; but she was sure of one thing—that Dorla had enjoyed the picnic very much. Soon, however, her attention to the little play at which she was assisting, was distracted from the harmless, pretty trifling of the talkers beside her: several others of the party approached them. Miss Grayson, who was learned in ferns, was going up to the bed of the stream in search of some, accompanied by two or three Davises and Mr. Oliver. They made a *detour* with the purpose of breaking up the party in the pony carriage. Mr. Felix got very quickly off the grass as they approached. Dorla uttered a faint little sigh as she shook the last of the ferns off her lap: her "idea of happiness" was to have them stay away.

"Why, how quiet you are over here," cried Mr. Oliver, who thought picnics should be attended with hilarity. "You are having a stupid time, I am afraid."

"Yes," said Miss Grayson, maliciously, "you all have a look of being bored."

"O no," exclaimed Dorla, with bright innocence, "indeed we are not bored. We have just been talking of it."

"One needn't be Bacchanalian always to enjoy one's self," said young Davis, who had an irritated feeling about the jokes and songs and loud talking that he had suffered for the last four hours. He thought to be sitting under cool

shady trees, with just two people, one pretty, and one clever, was not a thing for a man to complain about. Miss Grayson looked at Dorla and said, hardly :

"Mr. Rothermel is not here. Does he never join you in your excursions?"

"O, yes, often, and likes them so much."

"What a pity he could not come to-day. We must give him longer notice next time we go. You are *sure* it doesn't bore him?"

"O, quite sure."

"Then, let us bring him next time in place of Mr. Varian. For he looks so *ennuyé*, it really spoils my comfort."

Dorla laughed lightly, and looked at him. "Why, I don't think he does. Mr. Varian, what have you done to be so much commiserated?"

"He will have to sing a negro song, and burn his face scarlet over that hideous fire before he can be considered to have entered into the spirit of the thing," said Mr. Davis, mutinously.

"Davis, I am afraid you are not the happy man you seem," said Felix. "That has a sound of discontent."

"O, yes, I am happy, but I'm tired."

And the audacious young Davis threw himself down on the grass beside the carriage where Felix had been lying. "Mrs. Rothermel, mayn't I stay here and rest myself?"

"O, yes," said Dorla rather faintly. "I think you would all be wiser to stay."

"They are going for ferns; nothing would stop them. They are not tired at all." At the mention of ferns, Dorla tried to say something interesting and civil to Miss Grayson, who stood near her. She told her something about the ferns that grew in the valley, and showed her one that she had found that morning.

"But I want some *aspidium*," said Miss Grayson, hard to satisfy.

"O, I had some in my hand not half an hour ago;" and Dorla looked about the bottom of the carriage to find it among the remnants of her ferns. "No, I am afraid it is all gone. It must have been in the little bunch I made for Mr. Varian. Mr. Varian, won't you come here a moment?"

For he had strayed off three or four steps and was talking to Miss Davis. He came very quickly, at the sound of her voice; quicker than husbands and brothers and that sort of cattle come.

"Yes, Mrs. Rothermel?"

"I am going to ask you to let me have back that little bouquet I made for you. There's a scrap of *aspidium* in it, that I want to give Miss Grayson: we can't find any more." He took it out very quickly and handed it to her; twenty-seven, and man of the world, as he was, he nevertheless blushed a blush that there was no mistaking, and every one saw it but Dorla, who, intent upon conciliating Miss Grayson, thought of nothing but the scrap of fern which she was disengaging from the others. Felix was in a rage, and meant never to notice her again; hardened creature, what did this mean? The distracting coquetry of her words and manner when she gave it to him; "Here is a flower for you, I hope it will make you happier." And this cool matter-of-fact way of asking for it back again before these people, and making such a fool of him, how should it ever be forgiven?

If he had been self-possessed enough to do it, he would have said something very stinging. But he was, for just once in his smooth life, utterly confounded, and could not command his voice.

"Why, that is what the children call being an Indian giver!" cried Mrs. Bishop, who was very much perplexed.

"O, yes, I know," said Dorla, smoothing out the fern, "and it makes the children very angry, doesn't it? But I knew Mr. Varian's strong point was his temper, and that I was very safe. There, Miss Grayson, now if you press that

as soon as you get home, I think you'll have a very decent specimen."

"O, thank you very much," said the bitterly-flavored Grayson. "But I'm really in doubt whether I ought to take it. Mr. Varian values it very much, I'm sure."

"Not at all," he managed to say, confusedly, and with that general and humiliating confession of defeat, he turned away.

"O, that need not trouble you," said Dorla, innocently. "I'm afraid he doesn't know one fern from another; it's probable he took it for a scrap of parsley, and I don't believe that he could tell the difference between clematis and wild-rose."

"Well," said Miss Davis, "then we will give him a lesson. Mr. Varian, you shall go up these rocks with us, and learn all the clumsy names Miss Grayson has to teach."

"With pleasure," said Felix, going to Miss Grayson's side; he was very glad of an excuse to get away. His rage towards Dorla expressed itself in this alacrity. He could not believe she was not the most profound, the most unprincipled of coquettes, and yet he could not divine any cause he had given her, in their brief and golden friendship, to affront him in this way. He went off with Miss Grayson on the fern hunt, but he made rather an absent-minded and unprofitable companion. He was continually going over in his mind the possible causes that could have made Dorla treat him so; he laughed bitterly at himself for being annoyed about it, and voted it served him right, at his age, for believing in any one's sincerity. He assured himself the only thing that made him feel so sore about it, was the knowledge that other people had witnessed his discomfiture. And then he pushed it away and became ardently interested in Miss Grayson and the ferns, and then he went back to it again, and grew absent-minded and random in his talk.

Miss Grayson was a little sharp and shrewish when she found this out; she and Miss Davis had both burned their faces quite red in the sun, and they looked a little draggled

and untidy with their scrambling in the woods, and their domestic service in the matter of the feast. Also they were a little tired and cross, and Mr. Oliver was a frightful bore to have as a companion all day long; it was no wonder the climbing up the bed of the brook was a failure as far as pleasure was concerned. All were glad in the recesses of their hearts when it was proposed to go back to the picnic ground. Felix, as they drew near to the glade again, grew very silent, and filled his mind with conjectures about how he should find Dorla occupied, how she would receive him, how he should best show her his contemptuous indifference. He had been away an hour and a quarter; he had left her with young Davis stretched at her feet as her companion, and he was disposed to think Davis was inclined to be devoted. How should he find her? Talking to Davis with the same sweetness and innocence (save the mark) with which she had favored him? Perhaps she had given Davis a flower for his button-hole; perhaps she had said, "I hope it will make you happier;" perhaps she had smiled when she turned her face to him, with that flushing, illuminating smile; perhaps Davis liked it; ha! ha! it was very likely he did. Davis was young. She would make a much better affair of it than with him, an old experienced hand. She would find she had made a mistake in playing so capricious a game with a man who had had so much experience in married flirtations on two continents. "What was the silly creature thinking of?" he said to himself many times, gnawing his mustache gloomily as he helped Miss Grayson down the rocks.

All at once they found themselves at the bottom of the descent and in the open glade, and exactly opposite the pony-carriage party they had left. Felix felt his heart give a jump, when he found himself standing again beside her, and when he saw Davis still stretched upon the rug. They had made their sortie from the wood rather silently, he and Miss Grayson being in advance, and not having much to



say, and for an instant no one noticed them or looked their way. Mrs. Bishop was taking a furtive nap; Davis was lying on his elbows and picking a tuft of grass to pieces, and Dorla was leaning on her hand, silent, and thoughtful, and rather weary. When she heard the sound of Miss Grayson's step, she raised her head quickly, and flushing, illuminating, irradiating—there could not be too many pretty names for the smile that came across her face as she saw Felix. He was at her side in an instant; while Davis got up and shook himself, and began to talk to Miss Grayson.

"Why did you go away?" asked Dorla, *sotto voce*. "O, I have had such a dreary time. I have gone through two boat-races, and base-ball enough for a life-time."

"It surely must be time to go," said Felix, in an eager whisper, "and then we shall be rid of all the tiresome creatures."

"O, yes, go and start the others, *please*." And Felix found himself half-way across the valley "to start the others, *please*," before a bewildered feeling of shame and surprise came over him, to mix with the other bewilderment of relief and pleasure. Yes, certainly it was the softest thing he had ever done in his life, and he had to remind himself that he was twenty-seven, and not seventeen. What! Was he in his senses, and yet so twisted about by this—well, yes—this very pretty woman? Of course she was that; but he had seen so many pretty women! What was the difference? And he had never been taken off his feet before; never at least since he was out of college. This was absolutely ludicrous, but it was rather pleasant. Let him enjoy it while it lasted, it would soon be stupid like the rest of life. So he went to do her bidding, and rouse the others to the necessity of going home. That was not difficult to do; every one was tired, and longed to be away. The baskets were packed and in the wagons. There was nothing to do but to embark. Tim was sent to put Jenny

to the pony-carriage, and Felix busied himself in pacifying Harriet, and being a little ostentatiously useful. By the time he went back again to the pony-carriage, however, a new trouble awaited him. The pony was all ready, with her head turned towards home; Dorla was in the carriage; Davis was rather officiously tightening straps and looking at the harness.

"I believe they want you in the wagon going back," he said. "I was proposing to take your place and drive Mrs. Rothermel, if you're agreed."

"That shall be precisely as Mrs. Rothermel decides," returned Felix, stiffly, feeling furiously angry. Dorla looked anxious and embarrassed.

"Mr. Davis is so kind," she faltered. "But I really don't believe—that is—I have some doubt—don't you think they would like you better than Mr. Varian, in the wagon?" Then brightening up, "they have persecuted Mr. Varian so to-day, I don't think it would be right to trust him there without protection."

Felix, reassured, said with great urbanity, "I really should be afraid to risk myself among them," and without further parley stepped into the carriage.

It was now young Davis' turn to be disgusted, but that was not a very serious matter. Dorla attempted to say something amiable to him as they drove away, but Felix did not give her time.

"What an escape!" she whispered, as they left him standing sulkily behind.

"These boys are utter nuisances," he ejaculated, loftily.

"How patriarchal!" cried Dorla. "Why he must be three—four years your junior! Were you an utter nuisance that length of time ago?"

"How come you to know so accurately the age of Master Davis? Has he been confidential?"

"O, yes, to the extremest limit. I even know what day his birthday comes, and what his father's promised him

when he's twenty-five. He's to be taken into the business, and have—well, I suppose he didn't mean me to repeat it, but he will be quite an important young man if his father doesn't change his mind."

"A most desirable *parti*, no doubt. Now, if he had told you this a year ago—"

"O, he did tell me this a year ago, and has told me again to-day."

"He is a most ingenuous youth. I wonder the disclosure didn't affect your fate."

"O, it is too late now, and last summer, he was, to tell the truth, a year younger than he is at present."

"I can hardly believe it possible. It seems to me he never could have been younger than he is to-day."

"That's because you are a patriarch."

"Well, I might be something worse. I might be middle-aged and cynical like Mrs. Bishop; or young and gay, and heartless like Mrs. Rothermel."

"Oh! that results, does it? No heart in youth, a bad heart in middle age, and all the virtues at twenty-seven?"

"Twenty-seven! How do you know that I am twenty-seven. Has Harriet told you on what day my birthday comes?"

And so on; an hour or two of this sort of talk, full of interest and pleasure to those who talked. Who cannot remember such words; weariness to all but those to whom they were joy; such joy as never comes but once. Who has not treasured up, through dull and dusty years, such conversations, and never realized how little worth they were, till in some rare moment of confidence, he, or much more probably she, has set them in the light, before some one who could sympathise, if anybody could. But no one can.

It was now five o'clock; and Felix persuaded his companion it was just the hour for a little drive; so they turned abruptly, when they reached the river road, and went bowling along towards Dingman's in the cool shade of the tall cliffs,

while the heavy wagons lumbered along in the opposite direction, with their loads of sun-burned, weary and unamiable revellers. Many sharp eyes followed them as they turned off, and some sharp words.

"There goes your brother," cried Miss Whymples to Harriet.

"Where—how?" said Harriet saddling her glasses on her nose, and peering down the road.

"O, with Mrs. Rothermel, of course."

"O," said Harriet dropping off her glasses, "it's all right then. He could not be in better hands. She'll teach him to say his prayers a little, and flirt a great deal."

"There's nothing like your pious women for good times after they are married," said Miss Whymples, who wasn't much at repartee, but who could always throw a good solid lump of dirt. "I remember how you used to talk about her virtues last summer before she came; we expected to see something quite uncommon. I'm afraid you've changed your mind since then; you gave us to understand she wouldn't flirt before she was married, much less after it."

"As to that," said Harriet, "maybe I didn't take into consideration that all the men would be running after her. That makes such an amount of difference you see."

Miss Whymples reddened; she naturally didn't like to hear that all the men were running in a straight line away from her; she wore her hair short on the forehead, and she had her clothes made by the same French woman who made Mrs. Rothermel's. She did not feel that the men were warranted in what they did. Some people in the other end of the wagon, out of hearing of Harriet, said other things, that hit both Mrs. Rothermel and her admirer; who quite unconscious of the venom they had bred, sped on beside the river, on which lay golden and rosy tints of the evening sky. The air was full of pleasant odors; now they passed a blooming field of buckwheat that smelled like honey; now they drove along a road, bordered on each side by raspberry

bushes on which the berries hung, filling the air with their peculiar odor. There came sometimes across the fields a wind that was direct from the new cut hay; sometimes the woody earthy smell from the deep glades they passed, would seem sweeter than the breath of flowers. Then everything was so still; only at intervals the lumbering of a hay wagon, or the call of men coming from their work, or the whetting of a scythe, or the tinkle of a cow-bell, or the twitter of a bird. And the sky was so delicately blue, and the clouds so pearly. And all life was so fair.

When they came home, and Dorla said good-bye to Felix, she was neither tired, nor yet impatient that the pleasure was at an end; everything was so bright and perfect, she did not feel troubled that this day was over. All days were to be like this, for some reason that she had not yet defined. Life in the farm-house, however, was a trifle prosy; George had not yet got home, and two or three elderly aunts had come from some miles off, to tea. It was not easy to entertain them; and Dorla found it more difficult than usual to forget their dulness and their many differences. It was with a great sense of a burden removed, that she saw them depart packed into their stout old Rockaway, and driven by a "bound boy" aged twelve, of whom she had heard the history and the characteristics from the lips of each one of the three aunts. He was considered a great advance upon Tim, though he had his frailties; and "Sister Amelia," was criticised as very weak and lax for tolerating Tim. It seemed so strange to Dorla that people should be so much interested in bound boys, and such dull things. She had a good deal of imagination, but she could not throw herself to-night into the lives of these withered, narrowed souls. She was glad, very glad that they had gone away, and the best that she could do was not to think about them, and the easiest too.

It was a soft, brooding twilight; she wandered down the path, and sat under the trees beside the gate. An hour passed; she still sat dreaming aimless dreams, watching the

moon come up, when a sudden whirr of wheels, and a sudden pause at the gate, drew an exclamation from her.

"Mr. Varian!" she exclaimed, going quickly to the gate. By this time he was out of the wagon and stood beside her. "And this is the famous horse. When did he arrive?"

"I found him when I got back this afternoon. And I couldn't resist a little dash down the road, to make sure he had not forgotten how to go."

"And this river road is the best of all the roads," said Dorla. "O, what a beauty! What a dainty head. Mr. Varian, Jenny is rather provincial, isn't she. And I thought her so perfect when George bought her for me only two months ago!"

"Don't you think, Mrs. Rothermel," said Felix, "that you might take a turn down the road? It is such a fine night. I would bring you back in ten minutes if you said so. And I am really proud of my horse. I want you to see how he can go."

"O, it would be so nice; but don't you think it's very late? And besides how could I ever get into that high thing."

"I am afraid you can't trust my driving. Is that it?"

"O, no," she cried, "it's odd, but I never am afraid with you. I never think about Jenny's vices when once I'm in the carriage and you have the reins. No; it isn't that. I only think I oughtn't to be going all the time; and it is really late."

"Only a few minutes after nine. And the moonlight is so perfect."

"Yes, I know it," said Dorla, wistfully.

"Just ten minutes," urged Felix. "A mile or two down the road and back."

"It will take me so long to get ready," said Dorla.

"Pull the hood of that cloak over your head. It isn't cold," said Felix.

"I must tell Mrs. Rothermel then," said Dorla, fastening her cloak about her throat, a little undecided.

"Why take the time for that? You will be back before she realizes you have started."

So she let herself be persuaded, and went out to the gate and stood beside the wagon. She pulled the hood of her soft white cloak up over her head, and climbed into the wagon rather clumsily, on two accounts, that she had so much drapery about her, and that she had a faint misgiving that the horse would bound away with her, before her companion could get in. But that did not occur. Felix got into the seat beside her, almost while she thought of it, and they were away, almost while she thought of it, and out of sight of the farm house and its surroundings. The horse went like a bird; the wagon was of a perfect make, noiseless and smooth running; it was like swimming through the moonlight, and Dorla held her breath. The air was so beautiful, the hush over the calm silvered landscape so penetrating; sometimes they passed through warm currents of air in the ocean of cool blue ether—never had motion seemed to her so delicious, so exhilarating. They did not talk; that would have broken the charm; besides Felix had to drive, which was something, with such a horse as that in his hand. Not that Dorla dreamed of fear. Only she panted a little bit, when they drew up, three or four miles from home.

"You are not frightened?" said Felix.

"O, no!" she said.

"Then we can go a little further, can't we?"

And they were off again, whizzing through the air.

When they paused again, Dorla drew a deep breath and said,

"Now I think we must go back."

Then Felix said, "Here is a good little piece of road. Let me try that, and then I promise I will take you back."

The 'good little piece of road' was about two miles long, and ended in a dark and gloomy stretch of forest trees, with a bridge, and a little stream flowing under it with a faint

monotonous sound. The air felt cold and damp, and involuntarily Dorla gave a little shudder. Felix who was driving slower now, said, "You are not cold? Can't you put your cloak around your neck?"

"O, no, it is not that. But it is so gloomy here. I wish we hadn't come so far."

"Don't be frightened; we will turn here." And in a moment, they were turned homeward, and were out into the moonlight. O, the glory of the moonlight as they came out of the woods. It seemed almost the light of day. And Felix said "What a night it is!" and they drove slower as they went towards home. Slower, that is, when it was possible to keep the gay horse in. Felix would have been glad to have made the minutes longer then. When they were a mile or two out of the wood, and going up a little hill at a slower pace, two gentlemen in a trotting wagon passed them, and took off their hats.

"Who is it?" asked Dorla.

"Oliver and the infant Davis," answered Felix, not much pleased at the encounter. It did not trouble him very much though. He knew that before breakfast every one in Milford would know that he had been met with Mrs. Rothermel miles away from home. He knew that Oliver was growing a little spiteful, and that Davis had only the discretion of a boy. But all these things were in his line, and he forgot they were not in his companion's. Still he let the horse out a little more, and consented to reach home a few minutes sooner, on account of the occurrence. Dorla did not give it a second thought. To what did she give her thoughts? That would be difficult to say. Principally to the beauty of the night, and the harmony of the whole earth, and her own exceeding pleasure in its pleasant things. A sort of rapture to which she could not give a name. Felix was silent too; not a word was spoken till they drew up the little hill and approached the gate.

"Are you not sorry we are here?" said Felix, rather low.



"Yes," she said. "It was beautiful. I never liked anything so much."

At the gate stood George, looking a little anxious; and that broke rather rudely in upon the dream.

"We didn't know what had become of you," he said, lifting Dorla out.

"My dear! you gave us such a fright," cried poor old Mrs. Rothermel, flying down the path. (She had been searching the cistern with a lantern and a pole, all by herself, dear lady, not to impart her fears to George.)

"Why, I'm very sorry," Dorla said—"but I haven't been away ten minutes."

"Why, I've been in three quarters of an hour," said George. "But I won't scold, seeing I've been married such a little while."

Felix winced, but said something in an easy, apologetic way. And Dorla, while she kissed her mother-in-law, turned and said, "O, but such a horse! Nobody should be blamed for forgetting time and space. George if you could see him go—"

"Get in and let me drive you a little way down the road, won't you, Mr. Rothermel?" And Felix leaned forward quite urgently.

"Thank you," said George—"but I'm pretty tired, and to tell the truth, I'm pretty hungry too. We were all in such a commotion about my wife, that I haven't had my supper, though I've been home as I said, three quarters of an hour."

"You haven't had your supper! O, George, I am so sorry!"

And Dorla started forward, looking pained. Felix felt much more irritated than the man who hadn't had his supper. That was natural. George hadn't had his supper, but he had permanently a beautiful woman for his wife, who seemed to Felix at this moment, the very crown and flower of life. As he drove away, after a few more words

of unmeaning courtesy, he glanced back and saw her standing at the gate, so tall she seemed to dwarf the man beside her, her light dress falling with grace; her fair face surrounded by the soft, white hood of her long cloak. Her eyes looked so dark and soft in the clear, stainless moon light. Felix felt a fire in his heart, as he thought that she belonged to that insignificant, crude man.

"Hardly fit to be her bootmaker, or to groom her horse," he muttered bitterly, as he drove on along the road, which the moonlight still flooded, but which looked very commonplace and tiresome to him now. He could only see George Rothermel sitting at his homely supper-table with his wife beside him—perhaps waiting on him, perhaps smiling as she talked to him. No! He knew she was not smiling, except faintly and absently. He knew her eyes were wandering away from him with her thoughts. She was thinking—he was sure—she was thinking of the green and shady picnic ground—of the soft sunset sky under which they had driven home—of the flood of moonlight with which the heavens were overflowed when they two sped through it silent and in harmony.

**T**HE early morning was cloudy—at nine o'clock it was raining hard. "I will read some French," thought Dorla; as she sat down by the parlor window. But she could not fix her mind upon it. "Either I'm getting tired of sentiment, or I'm getting rusty in my French," she said, as she shut up the book. "I'll sew a little, and then I'll write some letters."

She tried the sewing, and she tried the letters, and then she leaned idly against the window, and looked out. The rain was coming down in great sheets of spray, the trees were bowing and flapping in the gale, it looked like an

Autumn storm. A few drenched and unhappy looking chickens scampered across the yard; the dog was sitting very close up to the door courting the shelter of the house; little streams of water were running down the path. It was rather dismal, and yet it was one of Dorla's traditions that a rainy day had its delights. Somehow, to-day, she did not find them readily. Perhaps it was because she was so chilly; it was really cold. She looked at the thermometer; it was 62°. No wonder she could not read or write. She would light the fire. So, with the assistance of the maid, she built a bright, gay fire upon the hearth, and began to think that she was happier.

"There ma'am," said the girl, "see how you've torn the trimming off your dress. You should always let me bring the sticks in, when you have your good clothes on."

"O, they're not my good clothes," returned her mistress, a little mortified to think how useless she was, and how inappropriate all her clothes were to a farm-house. Her dress was a delicate grey; she wore pretty embroidery at the sleeves and throat, and a double string of silver beads around her neck, and a lovely, large pink rose, and geranium leaves fastened at her breast; it was all simple enough, but no wonder it looked dainty to the drudge of a maid, who had helped her build the fire. "Now, Ann, that is a lovely fire. Isn't it worth the trouble?"

Ann thought fires in mid-summer were flying in the face of Providence, but only said "if people thought so," and went her worky way.

Presently Dorla heard the gate open, and she started up. This was beyond hope! Somebody coming to amuse her in the storm. She almost knew before she reached the window who it was, and gave a little cry of pleasure and welcome as she saw Felix, with his umbrella bent all ways, coming up the path. He saw her, and she ran to open the door, standing radiant with warmth and welcome as he came in from the cold storm. Even in the confusion of taking off his wet

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coat and putting down his umbrella, he found opportunity to say, he had come to bring a note from Harriet, which she had represented as of the last importance.

"O, how wrong of her to send you out in such a storm! All the same I'm very glad she did, if it doesn't kill you, I mean to say, of course."

"O, I'm 'nae sic tender plant.' I shall not die of this I think."

"And you walked all the way. That must have been what I had the fire made for! You shall sit there in that warm chair and dry your feet."

It was a good while before either of them remembered the note. Felix had established himself as an accredited messenger and then had forgotten all about his message. And Dorla hadn't given it a thought. Bye and bye he remembered the note and gave it to her. If she had only known its history!

Felix, having seen George Rothermel pass, as he smoked his cigar on the hotel piazza, had been seized with compassion for the lonely Dorla, and had gone to Harriet and urged her to send down for her to come and spend the day with them. (George had a valise in the buggy beside him and was driven by the faithful Tim.) Harriet jeered at the idea of sending for any one to come out in such a storm. Felix opposed her by saying it would at least be showing an attention, and would do no harm. Harriet said she was under no obligations to Dorla and it could do no good. Felix did not give up, and Harriet at last burst out with:

"Say the truth, and that you want to take the letter down yourself. You do not dare to go without something in your hand. I am to be catspaw, am I?"

"Yes, you are to be catspaw," he said with coolness, knocking the ashes off his cigar. "Don't keep me waiting. Come."

Felix, you're making a fool of yourself, and I'm ashamed of you," she cried angrily, drawing the portfolio out of

her trunk with a twitch that sent half the papers flying; "a man like you not to know his value—it's degrading."

"I know it is, but don't stop to think about it now."

And Harriet dashed off the note, burning with rage against her brother for having dared to fancy any one whom she had not authorized and suggested.

"There'll be trouble about this before you are through," she said tossing the note across the table to him. "I wash my hands of it altogether."

"Thank you. That is just exactly what I want you to do; and if I persuade Mrs. Rothermel to come back with me this morning, or this afternoon, I shall trust to your treating her with every consideration."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," said Harriet, hotly.

"O, you will think better of it," said Felix, sweetly, as he went out from the door. This little encounter had put him out of temper. Harriet always had the effect of doing that, whether she said much or little. He felt a good deal ashamed of himself as he went floundering through the mud and rain the long mile and a half down to the Rothermels, and he was very glad that he met nobody. It took all Dorla's sweetness and joy at seeing him to restore him to tranquillity. It was full ten minutes before he realized that he was glad that he had come. It was while Dorla was reading the note that he came to this distinct conclusion. As he sat warming himself by the ruddy blaze upon the hearth, and glanced around the pretty room, he contrasted it with the dull parlor of the hotel, with the women chattering over worsted work, yawning over novels, or tinkling meaninglessly on the piano; the chilly piazza to which he would have been driven, or the cheerless barroom with its black stove which would have been his last resort. There was Dorla, like a young queen, in her gray dress, and her rose, and her silver beads, sitting opposite him, reading the note with a flush on her cheek, and there was a long

idle happy day before him. Yes, he was very glad he had come. He could not have done a better thing.

"How absurd Harriet is," said Dorla, laughing, "she could not have thought I would go out on such a day as this."

"She did not know how absurd *you* might be under the influence of such a storm perhaps. You know you have said you were very sensitive to the effect of weather."

"Have I? Well then maybe I should have gone into a melancholy, if you had not come. Certainly I was feeling very dismal."

"Curious, we never know how near we are to danger. We can't tell what Harriet has saved you from. That is, if you don't refuse her invitation."

"O, think of it! shall I walk back with you at once? Or is it best to wait an hour or two?"

"Let us wait an hour or two if you think best," said Felix, sinking back in his wide chair with an expression of perfect satisfaction. Dorla laughed a little, and went across the room to get her work-basket.

"How shall I amuse you," she said, sitting down on the other side of the fire.

"I can't think," he answered; "at the hotel, I should have had the happiness of a game of euchre with Miss Davis; or the choice of reading aloud to Miss Whymple. And perhaps Miss Grayson would have played for me; who knows."

"Ah, what a pity. I can't make up for any of those lost delights. I can't play euchre, and you wouldn't want me to murder Mendelsohn for you. And as to being read aloud to, I don't feel in the least like it. But I'd try to be patient, if it would make you any happier. Reading aloud always seems to me like people in a story book. I never had a gentleman read aloud to me yet. I suppose Miss Whymple has, and she would know what to say at the sentimental parts. I shouldn't."

Felix laughed at this, and said it was a pity she felt so about it, for he read particularly well.

"Yes, I'm sorry about it, but it can't be helped."

"Just think—some sweet thing out of Tennyson, or a bit of Browning."

"O, please, I am sorry to be so sordid, but indeed I could not listen."

"Well, then, how am I to be amused. You won't play for me, though you said the other night you would, and you won't listen to me and admire my reading?"

"O, but you don't know how many other things I can do. You don't know how well I draw. You shall look at my illuminations and admire them, and that will take up some of your long morning."

"You illuminate? So do I, admirably. How much we can say to please each other. Mayn't I look for the portfolio?"

After the portfolio was found and examined they *did* find a great deal to say to each other. (Not that there would have been any lack of that, if the drawing had not come up.) Felix pushed a table up to the window, and took a piece of drawing card and Dorla's colors, and said he should surprise her by his skill. But they talked a great deal and drew very little. Dorla kept her embroidery in her hand, but leaned over the table and watched the progress of the design Felix was sketching out.

"What shall I put in here," he said, "on this border? The ground ought to be blue."

"Put in anemones," she said, with a sudden smile which Felix did not understand.

"Anemones? I've forgotten what the stupid things are like. (Not that I ever knew.)"

"Let me see, can't I find a plate in some botany," and she went off to look among some books, but could not find one.

"Why anemones?" asked Felix. "Won't a daisy do as

well, or mignonetta. You see I know a little more about them."

Dorla shook her head. "If you are doing that for me, you must put in anemones. Here, I will make you one in outline."

"I wonder what there is about anemones," he said studying the little sketch she made, and then putting it in his pocket. "I shall look up all about them, as soon as ever I go home."

"Ask Miss Grayson; she can no doubt tell you their history, in botany, in mythology, in poetry, and probably let you read her some 'sweet thing' about them in blank verse."

"Clever Miss Grayson! If it rains to-morrow, I shall stay at the hotel, I think."

"In the meantime, don't make that blue so *foncé*. See, here is a blue I like. Don't you?"

She brought him from between the leaves of another portfolio, a shabbier and more used looking one, a little picture, which contained the blue she meant to have him copy. It was the top of a hill, of buckwheat in white flower; over it played several yellow butterflies, and this against a blue sky. There were only three colors in it, the white of the buckwheat flowers, the yellow, and the blue.

"Don't you like it," she said, leaning lovingly over it. "How sweet the sky was that day, and how pure and ardent was the light. I never shall forget it."

"Then you saw it?" said Felix holding it in his hand, and looking carefully at it, for there was a great deal in it, to colder eyes than his.

"Yes, I saw it. But I cannot tell what it was I saw, nor why it gave me such a sense of pleasure. That is where my intelligence stops."

"Tell me about this picture," said Felix. "How long since it was done?"

"A month ago, in June."

"And do you know how true it is and how unusual?"



What has any one said about it? Has any one else looked at it?"

"Not a soul. Not a human eye."

"Well, may I have it?"

"Oh, yes, and a hundred more if you wanted them."

"This is mine then, remember."

"Yours, forever."

Of course Felix stayed to dinner. Old Mrs. Rothermel was a little frightened and put on her best cap, and got out the "good china." But Felix had the beautiful gift of being at ease and putting others so wherever he might be. And in a very little while she was quite comfortable about the fricassee and the succotash, which had laid heavy on her soul, and was thinking how well it was that her dear child had some one to come in and amuse her on this dreary day. The table looked very pretty, with Dorla's pretty silver, and the old fashioned India china and some flowers;—and every thing that came from the Rothermel kitchen was perfection in its way. Felix thought of the cold scraps of meat and vegetables hustled before the waiting crowd at the hotel table, and was again thankful that he had made his sister write the note.

"Mrs. Rothermel," he said, addressing the elder lady, "what shall you say, if your daughter consents to leave you this afternoon, if it should clear, to stay till to-morrow with my sister at the hotel? Harriet has sent me down for that. She thought as Mr. Rothermel was away, and it was such a dismal storm, she might be persuaded to come down."

"O, I could not think of leaving mother alone," said Dorla, while at the same time said the dear old lady:

"It will be so nice for her. Yes, of course she must go with you if it clears off." A little remonstrance necessarily, and warm protestation on both sides.

"Well, don't let us quarrel about it, dear mother, till we know whether it is going to clear or not," said Dorla, laughing, as they left the table.

After a little while, the clouds began to break away in ever so small a degree. "There is hope," said Felix, going out upon the porch. Then it began to darken again, and a pouring shower came on. But soon that passed, and the clouds began to lighten again, and more than one great break of blue appeared in them. And about three o'clock the sun shot great rays of gold across the mottled sky and dripping earth. They opened doors and windows, for suddenly the room seemed dull and dark and close, and the fire was an impertinence.

"Now it is settled," said Felix. "How soon shall we start, and is Jenny to be got ready?"

"Why cannot I walk with you? That is, if I conclude to go. And Tim can come down for me in the morning."

"Why not let me bring you back with my horse, when Harriet is willing to let you go. I believe there is something on hand for to-morrow morning. Do not promise to be back at any time precisely."

While Dorla went up to dress, Felix set himself to finish the border of anemones. But that was too much like work, and after a while he laid it down, and hunted through her favorite books, which lay about the room, and wrote his name on a page of one of them, and the date; which she found a year after, on a very different day from this, and read with very different eyes. When they started from the house, it was nearly five o'clock; the air was clear and fresh and almost cold. The sun was shining brilliantly in one half of the heavens, and in the other, there were still masses of black clouds. The foliage was fresh and shining from the rain, and the earth was black with the water that had not yet sunk away. It was an inspiring kind of afternoon: the wind that was driving the black troops of cloud away was in their faces as they walked along. The walks and drives of the few days had all been delightful to Dorla, but the most beautiful of all.

"Think of the people shut up in close dull rooms this beautiful afternoon," she said.

"If they can't be out, I pity them—but if they don't choose to be, I hold them in contempt," he answered, sending a stone after a bird which of course he did not hit. "I should like to be a boy, fifteen my next birth-day, with a fishing-rod upon my shoulders, and a pocketful of worms for bait."

"How about Latin grammar when the holiday was over, and six hours in a hot school-room out of the twenty-four?"

"Latin grammar to the—squirrels. I should be Tim; nothing above that you may be sure."

"Well, then, you would be a bound boy."

"Bound to Mrs. Rothermel."

"Oh, yes. How kind I would be to you. I would teach you to spell on winter evenings by the kitchen fire."

" 'While the girls are weaving baskets  
And the boys are shaping bows.' "

"Yes: how pleasant it all sounds, but I'm afraid six evenings in the week of it would be a trifle dull. Country life has two sides I suppose."

"Seriously, Mrs. Rothermel," said Felix, abruptly, "how do you think you are going to endure the winter here. I've been wondering whether you have ever thought about it."

"Oh, what is the use of thinking," exclaimed Dorla, with a sudden half-smothered sigh. "I have my books. I like to be alone better than people generally do. Oh, I shall get on very well. Don't be sorry for me. I've made my arrangements to be extremely happy."

"But you will come to the city, perhaps, for a month or two?"

"I don't know about that. I have not been very happy in the city. My life there was very dull."

"But it need not be so always. You know a married woman can have many more liberties than a young girl can; though I know that is not your way. You are very much afraid of having a good time."

"I am afraid you don't know me. This for instance."

"Oh, you don't call *this* a good time!"

"A good time! Why, it is the outside limit of enjoyment. I never wanted to do anything so much in my life. I was so afraid Mrs. Rothermel wouldn't make me come, I could hardly breathe. And if it hadn't cleared away, I am sure I should have cried."

That certainly ought to have satisfied Felix. They did not go to the hotel by the straightest, shortest way, but they went down to the Bluff, and down a steep, muddy, unnecessary path to the river. They waited a little while to see if they could get a boat and have a row; but they could not get it and so went up the steep path again, and rested after their scramble, on the Bluff, well wrapped up, with the wind blowing freshly off the river, and the lowering sun shining strangely on the parti-colored landscape. There were beautiful cloud effects and all that, and they talked a little artist jargon, but laughed about it, like two honest amateurs.

"Really, we must go," said Dorla, starting up, as the town clock struck six in the faint distance. "It is tea-time at the hotel, and Harriet will be much displeased if we keep her at the table."

When they reached the hotel steps, the people were just collecting ready to go in. Felix began to have some misgivings as to their reception. If Harriet dared to be uncivil, he would make her sorry. (But that would do justice more good than Dorla.) He caught sight of her in the hall, and leaving Dorla for a moment, hurried in to meet her and give her a word of warning.

"Here's Mrs. Rothermel," he said in a low voice, "and I hope you'll make it as pleasant for her as you can."

"O, I'll leave that for you," returned Harriet, with a

sniff of high contempt as she put her eye-glasses on her nose to look about for the unwelcome visitor.

"Well, then, you'll put an end to the fête."

"The fête! What fête?"

"At the Rothermels; but mind you don't say any thing about it."

"O, nonsense, I don't believe it will come to any thing. I've heard of such plans before."

But she was a little mollified and a little interested, and she also enjoyed having Felix obliged to ask a favor of her.

"Mind you don't say any thing about it," he whispered, as they went towards the visitor. And Harriet, though a little less demonstrative than usual, Dorla thought, gave her no occasion to doubt her welcome. They went in to tea together, Dorla as bright as a rose from her long walk, and her happy day, and looking a greater contrast then ever to the ennuyé crowd.

"What a dull day it has been!" said Mrs. Bishop, who was their vis-à-vis at the table.

"A dull day! O, I don't think so. And the afternoon has been so splendid."

"Too wet to go out, and a little chilly in the house," she said, pulling a knit shawl a trifle closer round her shoulders.

Dorla had thrown off her wrappings, and looked warm and radiant.

"One never has any appetite in such weather," said Miss Davis, pushing away the pallid slices of cold lamb on the little oval delf dish in front of her.

"O, let me have it, if you don't want it, won't you?" said Dorla. "For I am so hungry."

"This meal is always insupportable," said Harriet. "Dorla, I really wonder that you came before you had your tea."

"O, for a cup of tea that was not all tepid water and sugar," sighed Mrs. Whymple, from the other end of the table.

"And toast that did not taste of smoke," said her daughter fretfully.

"Really this cake was made a week ago to-day. I recognize three of those cookies. They have been on the table every night since my arrival."

This was a wail of Master Davis, who was still of an age to be interested in cake, as Felix whispered to Dorla, while he put sugar in her tea.

"I certainly think we ought to speak to the proprietors," said Mrs. Varian. "The biscuits are always yellow with soda or some such horrid preparation."

"O, my dear mother," cried Felix, "you seriously affect my spirits. I am sure everything tasted very good to me. I began my tea at peace with all mankind; and now I am thoroughly embittered. Truly, I do not see how I am to satisfy my appetite. There is nothing left uncondemned upon the table. And yet everybody is eating."

"Everybody must eat," said Davis, stoutly, helping himself to a large piece of cake.

"I should die without my cup of tea," said Mrs. Whymple, sending her cup away to be refilled, while her daughter took the opportunity of ordering more toast, and Mrs. Varian having broken open five biscuits and found two of a complexion that suited her, ate them to a running accompaniment of complaint.

"I suppose it's because I am so hungry, but everything seems nice to me," said Dorla, meekly, a little ashamed of eating so much of things that were so disapproved.

"Well, I'm glad you like it all," cried Miss Whymple spitefully. "I think you must be feeling very happy."

"Oh, I am. No doubt that is one reason."

"Maybe we should all be happier if Mrs. Rothermel were oftener at the table," remarked Mr. Bishop, with gallantry.

"We'd better speak to the proprietors about it, and make an inducement for her to come, if it is going to put a stop

to the complaining," said Harriet, with a little venom. For it was not always that Felix found everything so satisfactory as to-night.

After they had left the table, Dorla, feeling unconsciously the coldness of Harriet and the ill-nature of Miss Whymple, took refuge with Mrs. Varian. This lady, for some reason, was a little more interested in her than usual. She put her arm around her in a motherly sort of way and said, "My dear, I didn't know you were so good looking!" Nothing could have pleased the young woman better. She turned her head about and kissed Mrs. Varian's hand which lay upon her shoulder. Then they went and sat down on the piazza by themselves.

"It's nice having Felix home, isn't it?" said the mother.

"O, yes! how happy you must be," said Dorla, "and so proud of him. Mrs. Varian, I often have wondered since I saw him, how you could ever let him be so much away."

"My dear, he doesn't ask me." And the selfish, easy-tempered mother gave a little sigh. "Our children don't live for us, you know. We are only part of the furniture of the nursery, and they think they have the world before them, when they once get out of it."

"O, Mrs. Varian, it must be hard for a mother to feel that. I do not think I ever could."

"I think you will some day. It is part of a woman's lot, to be left behind."

"Yes, but not forgotten! It would be hard to be left behind, but it would be death to be forgotten, to feel you had not made yourself a part of your child's life, that you were not a constant influence."

"Ah, my dear, we all have these ideas when we begin life. We have to give them up as we go along, one after another. When you are as old as I am, you won't have much sentiment left, I am afraid. Yes, I went through all this sort of feeling when Felix and Harriet were babies—particularly Felix, for he was the first, and you know we always

feel as if the world had began again when our first baby comes. And Harriet was a cross little torment, enough to take the sentiment out of Mrs. Die-away herself. But Felix was such a perfect piece of flesh and blood, and so coaxing and good always, there was some excuse for thinking he would always do exactly as I wanted him to do."

"O, one can't expect that, can one?" said Dorla, uneasily. "Children have their own lives to live and can't think our thoughts, and just live ours. But if they love us, and are affectionate and tender always—"

"Yes, that's something. But you'll find it's full of disappointment, and that the less you expect of your children, the less chagrin and sorrow you will have."

"Mrs. Varian, you to say this, of all women!" cried Dorla, coaxingly, following Mrs. Varian's glance towards the group, among whom Felix stood a Prince.

"He is handsome, isn't he," said the mother, with another little sigh. "But he isn't much to me, my dear. To-morrow I couldn't get him to go there or to stay here, if he didn't feel like it. Some foolish pretty woman could take him to the ends of the earth if he fancied the color of her eyes, while I might storm and scold and plead without the least effect. No; Felix is not a bad son; he has never given me any real anxiety, and I suppose I ought to be very thankful. All the trouble is, he has had too easy times, too much money, too much liberty, too many people after him. No wonder that he won't mind me. There's more 'to him' as the Yankees say, than has come out. He wants a good sharp trouble, Master Felix does. And I sometimes wish it would come and settle him."

"O, don't wish that!" said Dorla, wincing. "Things come soon enough."

"Well, maybe I need it too, as well as he. Yes, my dear, if anybody ever says to you, I am a worldly woman and have brought up my children badly, you can tell them I know it, and have known it a good deal longer



than any body else. It was too late, though, before I found it out. And what with good health and prosperity, and the power to enjoy my easy life, I am just going on as I have always gone; and heaven knows when my reformation is to come. It's hard not to wish things different for the children, but for myself I can bear whatever chances. I'm not a coward when the time comes. But this is idle talk. Here comes Felix for you, and I must be going in." She gathered up her yellow covered book and her fan and her shawl, and lumbered away into the house by the nearest door. Her voice had been husky and Dorla had seen tears in her eyes. It was so sudden and unexpected a manifestation of feeling, that she was silent and abstracted even after Felix joined her. She had, more than is usual at her age, the power of entering into the feelings of others; and even while the son talked to her, she was going back into the life of the mother, who had shown her for one moment her real heart.

"What has my mother been saying to you," asked Felix, in a little while, quick to perceive her abstraction.

"Nothing," returned Dorla, coloring. "Nothing of any moment."

"But something you will not tell me," he said.

"There is no reason I shouldn't, but it was nothing."

For if the mother had sworn her on the Four Gospels, she could not have felt more bound than she did to keep that half-involuntary confidence sacred. She wondered whether Mrs. Varian had ever in her life said as much as that to any living being, and she had judged her rightly when she felt that she had not. That keen light, flashed for a moment into the depths of the worldly woman's regret and disappointment, troubled her imagination. How was it possible, she thought, to live comfortably, nay, even with jollity, over that dark abyss. Disappointment, she knew we all have to live through, but remorse, self-condemnation, that was insupportable. "I have been a worldly woman, I have

brought up my children badly." That was a failure. Who could bear such retrospect. And then she thought of the comfortable easy matron, with her novel and her foot-stool, her sharp tongue and her lazy wit, taking an interest in everything that was going on in the floating world about her, exacting about all her comforts, absorbed in the present moment; and the stricture at her heart relaxed; there must be some mistake, she could not have understood her words.

"We are going over to the cottage bye and bye, for some stupid game or other. Harriet insists," said Felix.

"I am sure you do not mean to call Twenty Questions stupid, and I suppose that is the game, for it is Harriet's great delight just now."

"Do you like it?"

"Better than any way we could have spent the evening, except perhaps, dancing."

"And you would have liked dancing? We will dance. Harriet shall give up for once."

"I beg you, please do not speak to her about it. Let me tell you, I had *rather* play the game, *really*. I am too tired to dance."

Felix sat down reluctantly. "She is so self-willed," he said. "Why could she not have asked you, before inviting those people, and making all the plans?"

"We are all self-willed I think, as far as that. Who doesn't like to entertain in her own way. And besides, it is always so difficult to get people to play for dancing. I don't wonder Harriet hates to be asking favors of those she doesn't like particularly."

Felix looked at his companion as if he thought she were an angel, while she made these excuses for his trying sister.

"I will tell you," he said. "We will make up for it to-morrow evening; we will have a ball, and you shall dance whatever you please and as much as you please."

"Whatever Miss Grayson pleases, and as much as we

can get music for, you mean. I have been at these balls before," said Dorla, rather languidly.

"No," said Felix, "not that manner of ball. I will telegraph down to-night for music; we will have some extra lamps put up in the ball-room; and who knows, some mild decorations. Fauchère shall make our ices, and all shall wear their finest clothes. You shall invite whom you think best, and it shall be your ball."

Dorla gave a little exclamation of pleasure, (she was only twenty.) "Now that will be delightful. You are sure nothing else is going on?"

"Nothing. But if there were forty things, they should all give way, and you should have your ball."

"Will Harriet take kindly to it?" said Dorla, who always had misgivings. "You know she doesn't care for dancing."

"I know. But she must learn to like what other people do, at times."

"The fact that she ought to, won't help us, if she gets a prejudice against it."

"O, I will manage Harriet, never fear."

"But *please* don't say anything disagreeable, don't make her annoyed at me; I would rather never dance again."

"O, never fear; now let us see what we must do. We shall want seventy-five people. No, a hundred. Better make it pretty general, had we not?"

"O, yes; don't hurt anybody's feelings."

"I can see Fauchère in the morning. I will speak to-night about the ball-room; and I ought to send the telegram at once." He took out his memorandum book, and wrote the telegram while he talked. Then tearing it off, he said, "Now let us decide who shall be invited."

It took them a great while to do this, and while they were deep in it, a messenger arrived from Harriet, asking them if they would come over to the cottage at once, as the Twenty Questions' party were ready to begin their game.

"Bother their twenty questions," said Felix, irreverently, getting up.

"But I like it," said Dorla, following him.

"Only you like dancing better."

The parlor of the cottage was long, and low, and narrow, and a trifle damp. Several stains on the ceiling above accounted for this; and one of the guests tumbled over a foot-tub placed in a corner to protect the carpet from a leak.

"One more such storm as this, and we should have to leave," said Mrs. Varian, who was established in the easiest chair in the room, with a foot-stool under her feet, and a screen behind her back. "What people put up with in their summer quarters!"

The dampness and want of fire were atoned for by plenty of lighted lamps, and the scene was quite brilliant to Dorla and Felix as they came in from the twilight. The people were all arranged for the game, on each side of the room; Harriet was restlessly moving up and down between them, and met Felix with a reproach for his tardiness.

"I can't imagine the pleasure in keeping people waiting," she said, tartly. Dorla colored and looked uncomfortable, but Felix did not seem to mind at all.

"You two go to that side," she said, going to the opposite side herself. "Now *we* are going to give the subject."

Dorla and Felix had seats at the upper end of the room, (in the neighborhood of the foot-tub.) Felix's chair was a little behind Dorla's, and he talked to her *sotto voce* a good deal of the time. This was not particularly objectionable as every one else was talking. Oliver and Miss Davis were on their side, and rather led the game, and Dorla and Felix took very little interest in it. "Animal and vegetable kingdom," "yellowish-brown and white," "to sustain life," "poetic fiction," "present century," rolled meaninglessly about their ears for some time. They were talking about who they should invite to-morrow. Finally, Dorla saw they were needed in the game, Miss Davis was getting fretful,

and the other side triumphant. So she whispered to Felix, to please attend to the game, and to get her the list of answers from the umpire. He got them for her.

"It doesn't sound like much," she said, "but let us try to think." Then after a moment, she whispered to him to please ask what person or persons were principally connected with this yellowish-brown and white object. (For she had a great objection to hearing her own voice in an assemblage of over four persons.) Felix had not this objection, and asked aloud, after getting permission of the party. The answer after an agitating discussion, and much consultation, came.

"Two men."

"O, I think I know," she whispered, all excitement.

Then Felix grew interested. "Tell me what you think it is," he said.

"O, I am afraid it isn't right."

"You're given to misgivings, I've remarked."

"I know it; but just ask this question, and it will decide. Ask the rank of these two men."

After a hot battle of rights over the matter, Harriet contending that the answer should be given separately respecting each man, so making two questions, and Oliver maintaining that they were bound to tell it all at once, the answer was given.

"One man was in the lower rank of life, the other in a higher."

"Now I do know," whispered Dorla, with enthusiasm.

"It is the 'One Fish Ball.'"

"Shall I roar it through the hall," cried Felix, starting to his feet.

There was dismay and confusion well concealed, in the opposite party.

"Roar what through the hall," said Miss Grayson, stoutly.

"Your One Fish Ball," returned Felix.

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"We are tired of waiting," cried the other ~~side~~.

"We must decide on something," said Mr. Oliver, anxiously.

"The mirror of the Lady of Shallot," whispered Dorla, in her companion's ear.

"The very thing," he said. So he went among the others and told them that must be the subject, and it was accepted without much demur.

"I thought you would like some 'sweet thing' out of Tennyson," she said, when he had come back and they had settled themselves into their places. The first questions went off rapidly and amicably. It was of the mineral kingdom; it never really existed; it was probably of an oblong shape; it was probably two feet by a foot and a half in size; its use was to convey intelligence; it was heard of in poetic fiction; the person principally connected with it was a woman.

"We are lost," said Dorla, trembling with excitement. "I can see Harriet has caught the idea of it."

"We will put her off," said Felix, confidently. Then the color was asked.

"Steel grey," the younger Whymple had begun to say, when Dorla, uttering a cry, flew down the room and stopped her.

"Don't be such an idiot," she whispered, forgetting decency; "they almost know now; you would just be telling them."

"I shall play a fair game," said the young woman much affronted. "It is steel grey."

"It isn't," said Dorla, warmly, under her breath. "It isn't any more steel grey than any other color. It reflects all colors; it is one color one moment, another another."

In a moment the line was doubled up, and there was a hot discussion, heads all together. Felix of course maintained Dorla's rather questionable position; so did Mr. Oliver and Mrs. Varian. But the others declared them-

selves unable to see it in that light. Dorla argued, her eyes flashing—she went on her knees beside Mrs. Bishop's chair, and coaxed and reasoned as if her life depended on it. She put her hand on that of the stubborn Miss Whympie, and said "*Dear Miss Whympie,*" in a tone that might have melted a heart of steel-grey granite. She finally conquered, and went back breathless to her seat, while the answer was given, "all the colors of the rainbow."

"After all, it won't help us much," said Oliver. "They'll be very stupid if they don't see through it."

"We will at least die game," said Felix. Then the other side, convinced of foul play, were very rancorous and bitter, and would put no further question.

"It was very easy to see they would get no honest answers."

After they were mollified, and persuaded to go on, there was a forced peace, during one or two unimportant questions and responses. Then came the decisive one, "At what date was this poetic fiction written?"

It was Mrs. Bishop's turn to answer; she was beginning to speak, when Felix and Dorla flew upon her.

"The fifteenth century," they put into her mouth.

"Now, upon my word, this is trampling on the rights of conscience," she exclaimed below her breath. "It is bad enough to make us consent to say that black is white, and steel grey all the colors of the rainbow. But to say that Tennyson wrote in the fifteenth century! *that* is a step too far."

"I did not know we had anything to do with Tennyson," said Felix, loftily.

"*Dear Mrs. Bishop,*" whispered Dorla, sinking down on her knees and putting her arms in Mrs. Bishop's lap, "Mr. Varian knows all about it. Just trust him. This legend is part of Sir Thomas Mallory's book; he was a Welshman you know, and he wrote in the fifteenth century. Tennyson only used it, like all those Round Table things. As he says,



we haven't anything to do with Tennyson that I can see."

"But how do I know some Welsh fellow wrote it?" said Mrs. Bishop, dubiously, "and not Tennyson?"

"Why, you know it because Mr. Varian tells you so."

"Are we to believe everything that Mr. Varian tells us then?"

"I am sure I hope so," said Dorla, with emphasis. "I know I do, and I think it is a very little thing to ask of you, *dear* Mrs. Bishop; don't be obstinate. Just say this, and it will save us. They will never guess."

"I should think not," said Mrs. Bishop with a groan. The scruples of all the others had to be overcome, and at last the answer was delivered. A damp chill fell upon the other party. They were more than half-way through the game, and had not the faintest clue. Harriet particularly was much out of temper, for she had been pretty sure that she had guessed it, and now she was quite at sea. As answer after answer put them further from the mark they became exasperated quite beyond good manners. They grew reckless, some lost interest, while the leaders lost temper. They grew very wild in their guesses, and wasted half their questions.

"I have no patience with this sort of playing," said Harriet. "I never lost a game before."

"There must be a beginning," said her brother.

"But I have never played against this combination," and she shot an angry glance at Dorla, who was held responsible for all the trouble.

It is very amusing to be on the winning side of a game of twenty questions, and Dorla and Felix, and Miss Davis and Mr. Oliver were as merry as their opponents were irritable. The clock struck eleven; the last question had been answered, only one guess remained. The elders began to grow uneasy, and Mrs. Bishop actually put on her cloak. Harriet refused to give up; the rest of the party were for

giving in. Matters became serious; Harriet was very angry, Felix most exasperating. It had narrowed down to a family quarrel.

"I beg you," said Dorla, getting frightened, aside to Felix, "do try to pacify her. I am sorry we have gone so far."

Then Felix began to fear she might say something that would wound Dorla, and he ceased his gibes, but did not help her with her guess.

"Make haste, we must go," said Mrs. Whymple, who was getting sleepy.

"We give up," said Davis, who was very tired. Then Felix called out the subject, over Harriet's protest, which was loud and sharp. There was of course a shout of derision and rage, and a perfect clamor of voices upon this. Every question was declared unfairly answered, and the sleepy ones woke up to wrath, and for ten minutes no one could be heard above the clamor. Davis and Oliver closed in single combat as it were, over the list of questions. Mrs. Bishop forgot how late it was in her eagerness to defend herself from the many accusations rained upon her. The younger Whymple almost cried at her older sister's reproaches, and said it was all Mrs. Rothermel. Even Mrs. Varian forgot how damp the floor was, and stood for many minutes by the door convincing Mr. Davis *père*, how perfectly correct they were.

"Let us escape," said Felix, putting Dorla's cloak on. "I think it is hardly safe for us to say a word."

So they went over to the hotel, and waited for the arrival of the others, hoping time would heal their wounds. Mrs. Varian came first, and told Dorla to come up with her. She was to occupy a room next Harriet's, and opposite to hers. Dorla waited till she heard Harriet come up, and then she opened her door, and said softly "Harriet, you'll forgive me, won't you?"

"No, I won't," cried Harriet, in a fury, and slammed her door shut in poor Dorla's very face.

"There, there," cried the mother, laughingly, and kissed the visitor good-night apologetically.

Certainly for damage to good manners there is nothing equal to a game of twenty questions.

After breakfast, at which Harriet did not appear, and Mrs. Rothermel breakfasted between Felix and his mother, it was arranged that Felix was to drive to Port Jervis for something that was needed for the "ball." Mrs. Varian entered into the plans for this festivity with some interest, and promised to see that everyone was invited that should be, and said Harriet should help. Dorla looked doubtful at this, and Mrs. Varian said they wouldn't tell her it was in Dorla's honor.

"No, for I'm afraid she is my enemy for life," said Dorla.

"Oh, nothing is for life with Harriet, except her temper," said her brother, tenderly.

"Hush, Felix," said his mother, "you always provoke your sister. She's ten times as self-willed when you are here."

"Well, that isn't very often. She has time to become very lovely while I am away."

"She is a great deal nicer when you are not here, however you may laugh it off," repeated Mrs. Varian.

"Yes, that is quite true," said Dorla, very low, with a great look of soft reproach in her eyes.

"Well, I'll reform," said Felix. "I am in earnest. You will see."

Mrs. Bishop was sitting in the sun on the piazza, trying to get warm, and Dorla went to her for a few minutes. Felix took that occasion to ask his mother to get Mrs. Rothermel to go to Port Jervis with him.

"She'll be apt to think she ought to stay here with you and Harriet, if you don't propose it to her."

"Felix, what *are* you about," said his mother, laying her hand upon his arm. "You know every one is talking of this matter."

"Nonsense, mother. At your age to take such a thing as this so seriously. One would think you had been living in the woods."

"Well, well, I suppose she is old enough to take care of herself," said the easy-minded elder, smothering a movement of her sluggish conscience, but giving a little sigh, as she called Dorla to her.

"Why don't you go down to Port Jarvis with Felix?" she said. "I shall have to go over and sit with Mrs. Bishop for awhile at the cottage, as I promised her, and it will make it rather dull for you. Felix seems to think you will enjoy the drive."

"It is such a cool, fine morning," Felix said.

Dorla brightened. She had had rather a depressed anticipation of a hotel morning, worsted-work and gossip. "I should like to go, but would not Harriet enjoy it? and let me stay with you and Mrs. Bishop."

"Oh, Harriet would not think of it. She abhors my trotting wagon, and besides she has an engagement for croquet; I heard her speak of it last night."

So Dorla went to drive. "What is the girl thinking about," muttered Mr. Bishop, somewhat troubled, as he saw them drive away.

"She is thinking of having a good time," said Mr. Davis père, who was sunning himself in the same corner of the piazza.

"She has not stopped to think," said Mrs. Bishop, with more insight, and a sensation of compassion.

"Do you think it will make any difference when she does?" asked Mr. Davis, with a cynical little laugh.

"Yes," said Mrs. Bishop, thoughtfully. "I think it will, a great difference. But of course I can't be sure."

The Whymple girls ran to look out of the parlor windows at her, and were much chagrined. They hated her.

"How absolutely brazen," they said to Mr. Oliver.

"That young Varian is a reckless fellow, I'm afraid," said Oliver, for he must say something.

"Oh, I don't blame him," they cried in a breath. "He really could not help himself. She has not left him a moment to himself since he arrived."

Pretty soon, Mrs. Varian came and told them about the dance, and that diverted their thoughts from Dorla for a little while. Every one was glad there was to be a dance, even Miss Grayson, who was above it; for it was something to look at and to talk about, if not to join in.

The drive to Port Jervis was charming. Dorla buttoned her jaunty little driving sacque very close up in her throat, and even shivered a little when they started. But soon the sunshine grew warmer. And at Port Jervis they got out of the wagon, and walked a little to get warm. Then they did their shopping; that was very amusing, picking their way about the grimy little town, and going into shops where there was nothing that they wanted; getting, principally, caramels and some wizened looking peaches, though they had come with a long list of other and more necessary things.

"We shall have to give up Mrs. Varian's worsted," said Dorla, pausing before a shop door. "I don't believe they have it here."

"No, I should think not," returned her companion, "as it is a druggist's."

"O, well, they confuse things so; such mixtures. I am sure it is not strange that I mistook it for a milliner's."

"I am not blaming you," said Felix.

"No, but you are laughing at me, which is even worse," returned Dorla, coming down the steps in some confusion.

The people in the shops looked after them; it was not often they saw any two so gifted with health and youth and beauty, and with fortune too. A poor girl sewing at a heavy machine, in a close, dark room, had come to the window for a moment to breathe, and caught sight of the plume in Dorla's hat that had caught the sunlight. She leaned forward and saw her beautiful face, and her tall lithe figure, and her happy look.

"I am no older than she is," she thought bitterly, "and see the difference." And she went heavily back to her work when they were out of sight, and thought of her all day with envy.

There was a parasol to be mended, and a watch to have a crystal on, and for these they had to wait, but the time did not seem long. It was somewhat after twelve when they were ready to go back, but the day was still so cool that it was pleasant driving.

"You will not be too tired for this evening, I hope?" said Felix, as they drove across the bridge. "I ought not to have brought you here, perhaps."

"O, I shall not be tired. I shall rest to-morrow; for these last few days I have not stopped to think or breathe. Do you see! I have been always on the go. And I am not used to this sort of dissipation, and I shall stop to-morrow."

"O, it is good for you," said Felix, rather uneasily; "do not stop to-morrow. We shall have something new for then."

They reached the hotel just in time to go to dinner with Mrs. Varian, who hadn't waited for them, but who happened to be just passing through the hall. Harriet was decidedly cold, but less offensive than they had dared to hope. After dinner, they sat awhile on the piazza, with a number of others, talking of the evening's entertainment. A favorable answer had come in the matter of the music; the ball-room was being put in order even while they talked.

"Now I must go home," said Dorla, getting up as the clock struck half-past three. "Mr. Varian, am I going to walk, or are you going to drive me?"

"Exactly as if she owned him and his horse, and everything that belonged to him," muttered Miss Grayson, *sotto voce* to her nearest neighbor.

When the horse had been brought around, and Dorla had come down stairs with her hat on, ready to go, Mrs. Varian patted her on the shoulder, and gave her a motherly kiss,

and said she must look her prettiest for the evening. Mr. Bishop put her in the wagon, and Mr. Davis paid her some old-gentlemanly compliment as they drove away; and poor Dorla was very happy, quite ignorant of all that was being said and thought about her.

Felix tried to persuade her it was just the time for a little drive along the river, but this she resisted, only consenting to go the longest way, which was more than double the length of the ordinary route, because it was more shady (which it wasn't). The horse was as fresh as if he had not gone sixteen miles in the morning, and Felix thought Dorla was too.

"But there will be no dancing for me if I do not rest," and then Felix consented to drive directly to the farm.

At the gate she said good-bye to him, and went in the house.

"Why, George," she cried in surprise, meeting him upon the stairs, "you here! I thought you were not coming till the evening train."

He kissed her, and told her his business was over sooner than he thought, and now he was to be at home for a week or two, at least. "Tell me all you have been doing," he said as they went up the stairs together.

"George," she cried, clasping her hands over his arm, "I have been having such a lovely time. And what do you think we are going to do to-night. Mr. Varian has telegraphed for music, six pieces, and we are to have a dance and it is really to be my ball, though we don't say so, for Harriet is such a perverse thing, we can't depend upon her not to spoil it all."

"Why, I thought you were great friends."

"O, we were, but some miserable pique about playing twenty questions has put her in such an odious temper, you'd be ashamed of a child of ten years old that acted so. But no matter, she can't stop the dance."

"What are you going to wear?" said George, interested, but feeling a little as if he were out in the cold.

"My pink dress, don't you think so? It is the prettiest thing I have, and the most dressy."

"Did you miss me very much?" said George, sitting down by the window, and keeping Dorla's hand. He was yearning for a little sentiment, and something that belonged to him more than these high spirits.

"O, yes—that is," said truthful Dorla correcting herself, "I should have done so if I hadn't gone down to the hotel. I thought I was going to have a dismal time all by myself in such a pouring storm. It was very kind of Harriet to send for me, even if she did quarrel with me afterwards."

"It seems an age since I was away," said George.

"It *does* seem a good-while, doesn't it? so many things have happened."

"I travelled all night," said George.

"You did?" said Dorla, "you must be tired to death. Go and lie down, and take a rest, or you will not enjoy yourself to-night. That's what I am going to do myself."

But George would not lie down; he closed the shutters for Dorla, and kissed her, and left her alone to sleep. She was really so tired that she fell fast asleep, and did not waken till half-past seven o'clock, when dear old Mrs. Rothermel came up with her tea; then she lifted herself upon her elbow, and looked around the darkening room bewildered; but everything came back in a moment in a rush of pleasure. She threw her arms around Mrs. Rothermel, and exclaimed, "You dear, good mother, to bring up my tea! This is my last dissipation. I am going to be quiet *to-morrow*."

Mrs. Rothermel kissed her, and told her she hoped not, that nothing pleased her so much as to see her happy. George came up, and buttered her toast for her, and put the cream upon her berries. "Everybody is so good to me," thought Dorla, and she was so sweet and affectionate that



George was supremely happy, and forgave her for being in such good spirits while he was away.

The servants ah-ed and oh-ed when Dorla was dressed. Old Mrs. Rothermel almost cried with excitement and joy, that such a beautiful creature should belong to them. George himself was full of elation. He belonged to that small and almost extinct class of men who delight in having their wives admired. All the amiable ambition of his heart was to be of some importance socially, and the shortest way to this was through the applause that Dorla's beauty would obtain. One great element in his happiness was the knowledge that he had married the most noticed girl that had come within his sphere (this was unconscious; he thought his happiness was all made up of love). He had no idea of being jealous; he should as soon have thought of being suspicious of the Madonna in the picture that Dorla kept hanging above her bed. He was so content with his fate, he could not conceive that she could need anything beyond him; he had not much imagination.

Certainly, she was something to be proud of, as she came down stairs in her pink dress, with roses in her hair. He put her in the rockaway, and drove her to the hotel as if she were a very valuable possession. There they found Felix waiting for them a little restlessly on the piazza. Tim was given in charge of the horses, and George followed them into the little parlor.

"My mother is waiting for you," said Felix, as they entered. Mrs. Varian was occupying the time in a game of cards at a little table.

"There, there, Mr. Bishop, I suppose we must go," she said nodding to the Rothermels, and getting up with the difficulty peculiar to stout, elderly persons, and taking Mr. Bishop's arm. "It's our ball, and I suppose we must go and open it. Dorla, my dear, you are quite magnificent. Harriet, isn't her dress lovely? such good style."

"Quite too handsome for such a place as this," said Har-

riest, who looked shabby, and was not in a good humor yet. But she was a little consoled by the weight which her words had with George, who always looked to her with reverence. She took his arm and gave him some social maxims, which were listened to with much respect, as she followed her mother and Dorla into the room. George wished that Dorla had saved her beautiful French dress, which held the front rank in her wedding outfit, as Harriet said this wasn't a proper place to wear it; but all the same it was very nice to see the people gaze after her, and to hear the murmurs of admiration which followed her. She looked like a queen among the flimsy summer muslins of the others.

"Quite a beauty, quite a beauty," said the elder Davis nodding approbation, eye-glass and all. "She would be noticed anywhere. I have seen a great many pretty women in my day, but upon my word, I should be at a loss to say where I had seen a prettier."

"Imagine all that elegance shut up in a Pike County farm-house," said Miss Grayson, from a height.

"Poor Rothermel, I'm sorry for him; he has a life before him," said young Davis, with an irritated laugh.

As for Oliver, his withered old heart hadn't got over the tenderness for his sweetheart of last summer; he could not bear to look at her, and turned his back upon the cloud of pink when it appeared, and danced Miss Davis out of breath, to keep himself from thinking.

"Do you think that I am too much dressed," asked Dorla, with a shade of trouble on her face. "Harriet says my dress is too handsome to wear here."

"It isn't," said Felix. "Harriet knows nothing about dress. You should always be magnificent. You know I think you ought to be a queen."

She laughed a happy, innocent laugh, and the shade was all gone from her face. They went gliding away in a waltz, with the smile yet on her lips. The music was so delightful; it was such a pleasure to dance to it. The room was

not crowded, there was plenty of space; the air was fresh and good, from many opened windows; the lights were bright; the dancing did not drag.

"There is but one way for me not to have to give you up; it is to keep you dancing all the time," said Felix, watching jealously the movements of young Davis, who had been thwarted in many efforts to get near her.

When the evening was half over, Mrs. Whymples communicated to Mrs. Bishop, sitting by her side, in the matrons' row along the wall, that Mr. Varian had not danced with any other person all the evening; she had counted, and had not missed a dance. Once Mrs. Rothermel had danced with Mr. Davis, and once with that young cousin of the Morriszes, and Mr. Varian had stood aloof and watched her, and then darted up and claimed her the moment they had stopped.

"What do you think of such a state of things as that," Mrs. Whymples said, with suppressed virtue in her voice. "At least they might regard appearances a *little*."

"O, nonsense," said Mrs. Bishop, good-naturedly. "They're young and thoughtless; it's just the amusement of the moment. A month hence and they'll have forgotten all about each other."

Still she looked a little troubled and wished in her heart that her favorite had had more discretion. "It's a temptation to have such an amiable piece of insignificance for a husband," she reflected, making an excuse for the young beauty, as she watched her, still on Felix's arm, walking up and down the room, while George, radiant and satisfied, walked up and down it too, with Harriet, or some other person who was not in demand.

The evening was half over. Dorla loved dancing so, and was so entirely happy, she wished it had just begun. The music seemed to coax and woo her on from one dance to another and to charm away all feeling of fatigue. They were gliding down the room in one of the softest, sweetest waltzes.

"What a nice partner you are," she said, like a child who has found a play-fellow to its mind. "I had rather dance with you than with any one else I ever saw in all my life."

Perhaps it was her own words, perhaps it was the too eager look in Felix's eyes as they met hers: but at that moment there flamed through Dorla's heart and conscience, the first knowledge of what had befallen her, and where she stood. It was so sudden, so full, it came like a deadly shock. Before they had reached the end of the room, Felix felt the change in her movement.

"You are tired," he said, in a low voice. Then, as he caught sight of her face, "you are ill," he said, alarmed, for she looked strangely different.

"No, but I don't want to dance any more," she said, in an unsteady voice. Then they walked once more through the room. To the end of her life, Dorla remembered that walk through the room, while the world seemed reeling around her and everything looked unnatural and terrifying. The eyes of people said such horrible and cruel things to her. It had not seemed warm before, but now she felt suffocated by the light and heat. When they neared the door, Felix said, in a low voice:

"Let me take you out where it is cooler."

She said "yes," hurriedly, for she did not dare to trust herself longer where she was. She had left her cloak in a little room of Mrs. Varian's on the second floor, and there through the outer ball-room circle of maids and errand boys, he led her. He got her cloak and put it about her, and said, "Let me take you to the balcony; it is cool there and quiet, and you can rest awhile."

She hardly knew what she did, but followed him out into the air. There was no one on this upper piazza, which was not much used except by the children in the morning, and an occasional solitary reader or seamstress through the day. Felix perhaps remembered this. Dorla remembered noth-

ing. Her mind was surging and foaming with the tempest that one thought had raised. She sat down mechanically where he placed her chair, and drew her cloak about her; the air was chilly after that of the ball-room, but she did not think about the cold. Felix stood near her, leaning against a post that supported the piazza. Neither of them spoke; her face was white and fixed; he could see that partly by the grey shrouded moonlight, and partly by the lamplight from the hall, for on account of this festivity the lamps had been put about abundantly. He knew very well why she looked so. He knew what his eyes had said to her, and that she had awakened from her dream and knew she loved him. His heart was full of passion; he could not speak; his words would have choked him; he could only stand and watch her face in silence. He was not even composed enough to wonder what would be the result; he did not speculate upon her feelings. He was not glad or sorry that the moment had come that had revealed her heart to him and to herself; he did not feel triumphant or alarmed; he felt nothing but a hot passion that had risen above thought and apprehension and had covered everything.

Dorla did not look at him; you might have thought she did not remember he was there. With one hand holding the cloak about her throat, the other grasping the rail of the balcony, she sat perfectly still, gazing before her with a strange look that was both intent and vacant. But the hand that held her cloak rose and fell with the deep breath she drew.

The street was very silent; the village all asleep: a faint breeze stirred the trees, faint sounds of the music from the ball-room came up to them where they were. This poor young woman had unusual power to suffer. When another would have seen only her love, or only her sin, or only the present, she saw all, past, present and future—the sin, the danger, the hopelessness. Her imagination was so intense in its power, there was nothing left unlighted by it. At one

instant she was hard and bitter at the thought of the sacrifice that she had made so honestly and so fatally; at another she was thrilled to the heart's core by the memory of the innocent happiness that had an hour ago been hers. She was going back into her childhood—one moment—into her bruised, wounded, unbright days; at another, she was reaching forward to gaze at the cruel and impossible path that lay before her in the future. There was a great cry of reproach to Heaven, mingled with many cries for help. And foremost, and before all other things, stood the horrible form of sin. The purity of her nature, the whole teaching of her life, made a great white background for this awful shape. And all this in such stunning quick succession. It was such a moment since she had been happy; it was such an abyss of sin and sorrow into which she had been plunged. More than half her soul was conscience. "It was not my fault!" she cried in her agony. "O, Save me! Save me! How came I here? How can I get out? Kill me! anything to stop this pain—save me! save me! save me!"

She was a coward in one way; she was afraid of pain; and to look forward to suffering set her brain on fire. Felix could not see all this on her ashy face. He was not thinking of the sin, he was not thinking of the future; his whole soul was filled with her, and it seemed, without the help of thought. How long it was they thus were there, neither of them ever knew; by and by the near silence and the distant sounds were broken by the approach of voices, people speaking as people speak in every-day life. Dorla started and half arose as if she had been suddenly awakened from sleep. Felix moved uneasily and turned his glance from her to the door through which the voices came. Presently two persons appeared in the doorway.

"What are you two doing here by yourselves?" cried Harriet, shrilly. And then Dorla saw George beside her. She got up quickly and went to his side, as if for protection.

"I do not feel well," she said, speaking like a person roused from night-mare. "I want you to take me home."

"Nonsense," said George, who seemed unusually animated, "no one is going yet. They want a German, or a reel, or something to wind the evening up. Every one is asking for you."

"Please don't, George," said Dorla, faintly, while Harriet exclaimed above her:

"It's nonsense to talk of a German, of course; you ought to have been at that an hour ago, if you had wanted it. But we'd better all go down and have a Lancers, or something short, and let it be understood that that's the end, and send the music off. You're very thoughtless, Felix; you go away and leave no one to manage anything."

"Yes, come, that's the best thing to do," said George. "Miss Harriet has promised to dance with me, and we want you two for our vis-à-vis."

"I really don't feel well enough," said Dorla. "The room is so very warm."

"O, we've had several more windows opened, and some of the people have gone, and it is very cool and nice," said Harriet, who meant to have her way.

"But—I will sit in the parlor and wait for you. I do not think I'd better—" urged Dorla, with a last effort.

"Why don't you excuse Mrs. Rothermel," said Felix, in a low voice. "I don't think she feels well enough to dance."

The color rushed in a great flood over Dorla's face. It was the first time he had spoken since she knew the full, full truth. Then the blood went back again, and she felt faint and giddy. "Will it be always so when I hear his voice?" she thought, in that cruel anticipation on which her mind was bent.

"Why, my dear, you know it's only for a few minutes, and excitement always agrees with you," said her husband. "But still if you are not really able—"

French dresses, and not to go to places where there's dancing and temptation. Finally, the set was over; and somehow she got her husband's arm, and made him take her from the room. He wished very sincerely he hadn't made her dance, for it was evident that she hadn't done him any credit. He left her with Mrs. Bishop, while he went to see about the horses.

"You poor child!" said that kind lady, putting her hand on Dorla's. "You looked tired to death; these late hours are too much for you." Dorla's voice choked, and she gave a kind of low, hysteric sob, as she clung to her companion's hand; the voice of kindness touched her so. But that was soon counteracted by the tone of Mrs. Whympie, who pressed up to her side, and made a similar remark. Mrs. Bishop answered for her, and managed to save her till she could command herself. Then George came, and she went away with him, saying faint goodnights to both. Felix went down to the carriage with her cloak, which he handed to George, but he did not go any nearer her, and only bowed to them as they drove away.

It seemed to Dorla that they drove very slow, that the carriage was close and hot; only of one thing she could not complain, and that was of the darkness. George was full of interest in the events of the evening; told her of the envy of this one, of the admiration of that, what he had overheard, what had been said to him, of that contretemps, of this success. She tried to listen to him, and to make some sort of answers. At last they were at home. She went into the house and up the stairs before him. When he entered the room, she was tearing off the ornaments from her neck and arms, fiercely, as if she loathed them. He caught sight of a fracture in the lowest flounce of her beautiful dress, and stooped, with many lamentations, to examine it. She almost kicked him away with her foot; at least, she kicked the flounce away, and with it went his hand. He stepped back, looking much annoyed, while Dorla flushed deeply



and said in a softened voice, "I beg your pardon, George, only I hate the dress so. You can't *think* how I hate it."

Of course, George entered a remonstrance, and then she ceased to listen, and forgot to speak to him till she did something else to hurt him, and had to be humble and speak him fair again. In a little while she said, pushing her jewelry away into the box, and taking a candle in her hand, while her pretty dress dragged disarranged about her, "My head aches so, George, and I feel so restless, I am going to throw myself on the sofa in the spare-room, and sleep there to-night. It is so much cooler than in this room."

"Cooler!" cried George. "Why, it is cold to-night. I don't know what you're talking of."

When she was fairly in the room, she slid the bolt; she longed to barricade the door, to pile the furniture before it, to make sure that no one ever could get in. Then she walked restlessly across the room a few times, pushed up the window and leaned out and tried to get some relief from the fresh cold air. But though the night was grey and chill it did not ease the pain she felt. She drew back and pulled the blinds shut after her. Then with a sudden, fierce, low cry of pain, she threw herself upon the sofa and hid her face in her hands.

There is no use in analyzing such conflicts as these; it does not take much imagination to follow one so placed through all the windings of her prison house; one could hardly suffer more and be alive. She thought of the dreadful time when the news of George Rothermel's illness had been brought to her. That had seemed a conflict, but it was nothing when compared to this. Then the bitter days before her marriage, when she was resolving on the sacrifice. But she had never known what happiness was, and the sacrifice looked small; it is so easy to resolve to live for duty when you do not know what pleasure is. She had never fancied that she loved any one before; had not wasted

her heart in that miserable plagiarism of true passion that occupies so many minds in youth. The full sense of surrender to another, the perfect satisfaction, the complete feeling of companionship—these had taken possession of her before she dreamed that they meant love. If she had not been so pure she could not have been so deceived; if she had been looking out for emblems of that passion of which so many dream incessantly, she would not have been at a loss to find them. But she was like those children who learn their lesson in a play. The play was over; in bewilderment she finds that written on her heart which all time cannot efface.

It is so hard to be just to yourself in moments such as these, and to be just to fate. Dorla was apt to accuse herself, was prone to think her own wrong-doing at the bottom of every trouble; she tortured herself to know what she had done to bring this on her. She looked back to the moment, sweeter from the first than all the moments that had gone before in all her life, when she first saw Felix. She went through all the hours that they had spent together, step by step; a dangerous retrospect, if she had not been bent on self-accusation and remorse. She found herself guilty of vanity, of misspending her time, of shortened hours of devotion, of too much pleasure in the admiration excited by her beauty; but more than this, even she could not find.

"How deadly a sin vanity must be," she thought, "when it can bring one to such a strait as this." And then she could not help contrasting her life with those of the young women who surrounded her. It did not require much imagination or much presumption to find them fuller of such sins than hers. "But that is not my business—perhaps God means to help me to a higher place, through all this bitter chastisement." But this little bit of saintly wisdom did not at all comfort poor Dorla in her pink dress, and with her fleshly heart all wild with love for Felix. The touch of his hand, the sound of his voice, was more to her

than all the palms and crowns of heaven. "Oh, why—why!"—she cried with incoherency, going back to the problem of temptation. "I would have been good without it. I meant to be good with all my heart. I did not bring him here. I never asked to see him. I had not a thought but to serve God and to be a faithful wife to George." It is very hard to be coherent when you are frantic with pain. The next moment she was thinking of the yellow curl of hair in the locket Harriet had lent her. She longed for it—to have it in her hands, to keep it, to wear it, ever. "But I must never touch it. I must never even look at it again," she moaned. Then she thought that he had nothing that she had ever given him, nothing that she had touched, to keep and wear, in this long lifetime of separation that had come. Yes, there was a rose that had fallen from her hair to-night, that he had claimed and kept. Perhaps at that moment he had it in his hand, had held it to his lips; for was not this hour to him what it was to her? She covered her face with her hands as she felt the blood rushing through her veins with the bare thought of this. Then, starting up with shame and horror, as she remembered her husband, she tore from her hair the sister rose that clung there still, and threw it from her with a sense of fear. "My God!" she said, kneeling passionately with her forehead on the floor, "let me die if this cannot end. I ask, I pray to die, for there is not any other end."

Poor child! She could not believe that any other way could be made for her to escape; it is difficult to have faith when temptation is upon you.

When she was not fighting away the thought of this unholy love, it seemed to her she was falling into the sin of cowardice, of want of trust in Heaven, of absolute and blasphemous reproach. She thought of all her prayers, of the hours upon her knees in church; of all her supplications to be guided, that had resulted in her marriage, and she felt her heart grow hard. Then she felt her

helplessness, her utter ruin if she lost her faith, and she melted into tears and prayers again. But in all the tumult of thoughts that came to her, this thought came not: namely, that she might go on in this sin in ever so disguised and subtle a form; that she might be George's wife, and keep even in thought, even in the whispers of her secret heart, a place of love for Felix. This thought was impossible to her; it did not even come into her mind. How to cast out this sin, and to free herself forever from its bondage, was her problem and her prayer. She found herself caught, trapped, in a deadly snare; as she writhed in the sudden torture her whole nature concentrated itself in the effort to escape. If she could have blotted Felix out from her memory and from the future, she would have done it eagerly.

She did not dally with the thought of him; she feared him too much now; she feared herself too much, "her evil, evil heart"—poor child. She had that keen and terrible imagination though, that taught her it was not a work that could be done in one moment, at one will.

"I shall have to meet him, I shall have to hear his name. I shall have to feel that he is alive and walking the same earth with me, and suffering perhaps the same misery that I do." It was *this* thought that she found herself least able to endure: the companionship in suffering. It always gave her the same thrill and rush of feeling that she had had when she first thought of him cherishing the rose that had fallen from her hair. "I must pray that he may be happy, and that he may marry; maybe it would help me if he did." But a long space lay between that possibility and now.

After fancying the poignant and suffering to-morrow, after groping blindly in the blank and dreary future years, she came back pitifully and humbly to say her evening prayer—her evening prayer, while the dawn was struggling through the shutters, and the birds were twittering about the vines outside. It was in keeping with the disarrangement and discord of her life, no more out of joint and

strange than everything looked to her now. She got up and lit another candle from the dressing-table (for the one she had brought in with her had long since burned away without her notice), and kneeling down with her book of devotion in her hand, she said the prayers that she always said at night. This was the room to which she always came for her devotions, for it was seldom used, and on a little table in the corner stood a cross, and by it, her books of prayer. She was worn out and quieted by the excess and length of her emotions; and everything she did now seemed commonplace, yet strange, by the comparison. She turned over the pages of her book, and read a prayer "For Patience," and then one "In Temptation," and put a mark in at the place, with a humble sigh, knowing this must be daily praying now. Then she got up from her knees and took off her bright dress, and putting on a wrapper, brought a pillow and a blanket from the bed, and lay down on the sofa, putting out the light. She felt as people feel who have seen their dearest die, and yet live; and who, after a few hours of passion, resume the dull and fettering routine, and go despairing on again.

**T**HE next day Harriet came; and the next, the Bishops and some other visitors from the hotel, but all they heard was that Mrs. Rothermel was ill, and did not leave her room. And on the third day Dorla came down-stairs, and walked strangely and dreamily out into the open air again. It seemed to her a lifetime since the night she had gone panting up those stairs in her pink dress, with such a tumult of passion in her heart. Everything seemed old to her, old and worn out. Her limbs even ached and made her think of them, as she moved about. Her eyes had a sore, dull pain in them, as if she had shed all the tears that

a woman could shed while she lived. Her hands and feet were cold, and she pulled a cloak about her shoulders, which were so chilly she could not understand the brightness of the sunshine and the softness of the air. She looked into the parlor and wondered vaguely how she could ever have seen anything to please her in that cheerless and uncolored room. Ann was dusting it, and putting it in heartless order. She told her to take the flowers away, for they were faded; and no flowers after that went into those empty vases.

Then she strayed out into the garden, hoping to get warm. The flowers that she had loved were blooming gorgeously along the path; but she did not put out her hand to gather one. She saw them, but they gave her no pleasure; raised no feeling of interest in her mind. She passed the bed of ferns that she had watched and sheltered for so many weeks. They were withering and parched for water, but she did not go to get it, or send any one to bring it to them, as it was nothing to her whether they died or lived. All things seemed old and dull and lifeless. She had been patient when George caressed her, but vaguely glad when he had gone away; gentle when his mother busied herself by unnecessary cares about her, but tired, tired of everything. She went into the porch, and sat down awhile, where the sun shone on the step. But presently she heard the sound of wheels, and that gave her a vague sense of fright and she got up and crawled away, down among the trees in the orchard. That was all the interest she seemed to have left in life, to hide herself, to get away from people.

There was a seat in the orchard under one of the old trees. She went through the grass, and reached it and sat down. A favorite kitten followed her and sprang into her lap. "Poor little cat," she said and took it in her hands, more because it warmed her fingers than because she cared about it. The day was beautiful, soft and sunny; it gave one the sense of the full bright flood of the summer rushing swiftly to its close; there is such misery in being out of harmony

with nature; in being frozen and chilled and heartless in the midst of such wealth of warmth and sunshine. Presently the kitten saw a moth fluttering above the grass and leaped away to get it, making a pretty play in her pursuit. Dorla's weary eyes followed but a few minutes and then tired. The orchard was at the very foot of the cliffs, the seat at the edge of the cliffs themselves; a path led down from them about a stone's throw from where she sat, but it was little used, being very steep and rough. It was not long before she heard a stone rattling down from above, and then another, then steps and voices. Some one was coming down the path, was almost upon her. She rose to go, then sat down irresolutely. She could not escape except by running, and even then must be seen. And she really felt too weak to walk. Besides it was not likely to be any one she knew; some stranger perhaps, who had been at the Peak, and had stumbled upon this path and followed it down, only knowing that it would lead him to the valley. It was not likely to be any of the hotel people, any of those who knew about her, for they were all gone to-day, according to George's report, on a distant expedition, from which they could not return till night-fall. George had wanted to go himself, had bewailed her illness, and seemed to be really disappointed. His interest and pleasure in the small gayeties of the place were on the increase. He could not talk of anything else, and was almost boyish in his gossip. "I want you to get well, Dorla, and we will have a fête. They are all expecting something, and we must make the effort." He was so much more endurable when he was quiet and grave. Dorla wished Harriet would leave him alone, and not get him wild about society. It made him seem so small and so provincial.

The steps approached rapidly; the voices were those of men; in a moment she recognized George's, and sat down quieted, for she had a second time arisen to get away. "I thought he went to the village," she thought languidly, and did not even turn her head.

"Why, Dorla, are you here," he said, coming up to her. She turned as he spoke and looked up. With him was Felix Varian. She got upon her feet, somehow, and her thought was flight. Impotent, silly thought. She grew very white again and sat down, not having opened her lips to speak, nor having looked a second time at him.

"You're ill again," said George, in a disappointed, almost a vexed, voice. "I thought you were really better when I left you. I've been promising for you that we'd go to Brink Pond to-morrow. Here is Mr. Varian."

"Yes," said Dorla, and she panted as if she could not get her breath, looking down upon the grass below them. He stood before her with a deprecating, humbled, almost penitent look, that was mixed with an expression of alarm and distress at her appearance.

"I met Mr. Varian in the village," continued George, not at all abashed by Felix in these times, for he did not look anything of a swell, "and we concluded we'd take a stroll across the cliffs, and get our guns and go off for the day into the woods."

"I am afraid we frightened you, coming down so suddenly," said Felix, when he could command his voice, for he was, in his way, as agitated as poor weak Dorla was in hers. Satisfied and small-souled George went on and filled up all the gap with his discourse. He told Dorla how he had found Felix wandering about alone, having refused to go on the excursion, and by what steps they had been led to settle on the gunning expedition. It was plain he was a little elated with having Felix as his guest and companion for the day.

"And now sit down," he said, motioning him to the seat by Dorla, "while I go on to the house and get the guns. For I'm sorry to tell you, we've got to go up that path again; it's the shortest way into the woods."

"I don't mind the climb at all," said Felix, sitting down, for what else could he do: "but I am afraid we are disturbing Mrs. Rothermel."



"O, no, we're not," said George, comfortably. "She's very glad to have somebody to talk to; aren't you, Dorla?—I won't be gone five minutes—" and away he started for the house.

Dorla's very hands, as they lay helpless on her lap, were tinted with the crimson that had spread over her face and throat. Felix could hardly look at her; he had no effrontery now; but he knew that she had turned from pallid white to red, and that her breath was quick, and her lips parted. She was turned a little from him, as she had been sitting when he came, but she did not move an inch, did not stir, except as her breath came and went. He could hear the rustle of the silk lining of her cloak against the back of the seat on which she leaned, as these heavy, quick breaths came. It was a sound almost imperceptible to the sense; but Felix heard, and felt it, even though his own pulses were rushing, and his hand unsteady. There was such a silence. Felix tried to speak, but his voice would not clear itself; he sat looking before him, his straw hat in his lap, and in his hand a stem or two of wheat that he had pulled up in some field that they were passing. In the grass at their feet played the kitten; she caught sight of the yellow wheat moving slightly in his hand, and she jumped at it, and fell, and jumped again. He stooped and put his hand upon her, stroked her, and lifted her up to his knee.

"Poor little cat," he said, unsteadily; and then he found his voice. Three minutes of the five that George had said he would be gone, had passed; and he had not forgotten it.

"I am sorry that you are not well," he said, and then he looked at her for an instant. Her eyes were on the ground; she seemed to try to speak and failed, and then she said, not unlike herself, but with agitation:

"It is nothing; I think I am quite well."

"I wanted to know—Harriet could not see you—that made me think you might be really ill—things always seem worse when you cannot hear the truth about them—"

This was incoherent, but Dorla understood it well enough, only too well. The kitten struggled out of his grasp and sprang down and gambolled about the grass, then came back to his feet, and rubbed herself against them to attract his notice. He stooped down and stroked her, and said, without changing his attitude, as he continued absently to fondle her. "I am afraid you had got over-tired; I've been ashamed of myself for being so thoughtless; but I hope you're not going to be—any the worse for it—any time."

"No," said Dorla, almost steadily, as she drew a quick breath, and looked away over the wide, sunny fields. "I hope I shall not be; but I am not very strong, somehow, and I must be more quiet. I am going to be."

"Of course," he said, glancing half frightened at her, for there was a depth of resolution in her tone, of which she was unconscious. "But it is good for you to be in the open air. You surely are not going to shut yourself up in that—house."

"No—I always am a great deal out of doors, but I cannot go on excursions and such things—and I hope that—George—that Mr. Rothermel—will not promise for me that I will, for I cannot go. Indeed I am not strong enough. And I hope they will not be sending down for me." This she said hurriedly and almost inaudibly.

"I will not let Harriet bother you any more," he said, in a low tone. "But I am very sorry. I shall miss—that is—I mean—it was very pleasant all those days—"

That terrible scourge of blood flamed again all over poor Dorla's face and throat; and a deep dark flush mounted to her companion's very brow, and suffocated his voice. Not another word was said, and it was several minutes before George came back from the house; unsuspecting, poor small soul, the demon that his absence had called up. He was not very quick in reading faces, and he saw nothing in those before him to excite unusual interest. Dorla indeed, made a movement as if relieved and glad to have him come. But

that was no more than was natural, surely. She got up as he approached with the guns in his hand, and so did Felix.

"Sit down," he said. "Varian, I've told them to bring us out some sherry and a biscuit, for we won't get back to dinner at the ordinary time."

"I will go in and see about it," said Dorla, faintly, turning towards the house.

"No, no, stay," he said, pointing to her seat. "Stay and see us off. Mother is attending to it. There's nothing you can do."

"But I was going into the house anyway," said Dorla, hurriedly. "I am feeling tired—good-bye." She tried to glance back at both of them as she said this, but her eyes never reached beyond the level of the seat on which they had been sitting, and she looked so faint and giddy and her movement was so unsteady, that Felix could not help starting forward as if to offer her his arm. Then he drew back and half turned away.

George said, "Don't you feel well, Dorla? Shan't I go in with you?"

"No," she said, hurriedly, already several steps away; and George, for the moment much more interested in his guns and in his guest, began to talk about them.

"This is a Manton that my father had when he was a young man; and this is a gun I bought before I went to college, both fair pieces in their way. You must take your choice. I'm sorry we haven't any better."

George felt very conscious of the importance of the fact that his father had had a Manton, and that he had been to college, and he could not be expected to know that Felix was not listening to him, but was watching covertly the progress of Dorla to the house. On her way she passed the servant carrying the tray of luncheon; to which she did not seem to give a glance, and Felix saw her disappear into the house. Then he wished the guns and the luncheon and the host at the bottom of the sea, and raged inwardly at the bon-

dage he was in to them. But soon he reflected it was part of the matter that he should come back there to dinner, and so he managed to be as "mild mannered a gentleman" as was befitting and was wise.

At four o'clock that afternoon, old Mrs. Rothermel came bustling into Dorla's room (a faint bustle to be sure, for she was always gentle and unoffending), and said, "Come, my dear, they have got back, and the dinner is going on the table, and George is asking for you."

"I can't go down, *dear* mother, really I cannot. Make some excuse for me to George."

"I am afraid, dear, it will—hurt his feelings if you don't. He seemed to think it odd you weren't down looking out for them."

"He has forgotten that I am not well. Say that to him; and that I am lying down to rest."

"He's so afraid of offending this young gentleman," said the mother, doubtfully.

"He needn't be afraid," returned Dorla, turning her scornful face down on the pillow for an instant, then raising it, kissed her mother-in-law. "You know I would, if it were possible, dear mother. Tell George so, if he asks about me."

"Do you think he will expect me to be at the table with them?" asked the mother, hesitatingly, still in awe of the city people when called upon to meet them.

"No, I should think not," said Dorla. "They know we've had our dinner hours ago. Only see that Ann takes them everything in order."

"O, I'll see to that," said the mother. "Everything is very nice; but I never know about city people's ways."

"Don't be afraid," said Dorla. "Your ways are good enough for any one."

Then the mother, comforted, went down stairs, and Dorla heard her going softly to the dining-room to make sure that nothing was out of order or wanting to the comfort of her beloved George. The dinner at which she had been at work

for hours, was going hot on the daintily spread table; and soon Dorla heard George and Felix enter the room. She got up and crept to the door, and shut it; she did not want to hear, nor to remember who was in the house. She went back to the bed, and lay down, and tried to read Scupoli's book. It had been dear to her, and sacred in the times past, but now it failed to touch or reach her. She turned back to the little memoir in the front of it, and read that; and something in it swelled her heart with something like feeling. She thought of that dear servant of God, in his frightful combat of twenty-five years' length, and of the reality of his victory, and of the patience with which he had lain down beneath the rod, and given up all earthly hope and comfort. Here was something tangible; what seemed so impossible to her had been done.

"This is what I must do—I must read people's lives that have conquered; I am too hungry and wild to bear with maxims and sentiments; I must see what has been done." And sitting up, with eager, feverish hand, she wrote out a list of books that she meant to read. Some she had, and some she meant to send for. She wrote the letter ordering them; then searched for the ones she had; then went back to the bed, and at last, tired out by the effort, fell asleep for a little while.

When she waked, it was almost twilight; she started up, uncertain of the hour and place; she went to the window; a sound of voices on the porch below, and the scent of cigars, told her that Felix was not yet gone, and that she had not out-slept temptation. Then she went away, and threw herself upon her knees, and wept and wondered when it would ever, ever end. By and bye her mother-in-law came up, and Dorla clung to her almost piteously in her loneliness. She longed so to speak to some one; she was one who could have really lightened her burden by speech. But here was the kindest, tenderest soul, and she must never ask her to pity her, and must never let her know what she endured.

"Stay up here a little while," she said, for she was growing afraid of herself, "and let us talk a little, I'm so lonely."

"My dear!" said the mother, with solicitude, "I've been wanting to come up, but I was afraid of troubling you. I thought you wanted to be alone."

"I don't want to, now," said Dorla, restlessly. "It's so weary to think the same things all day long. Let's talk about what we're going to do. Mother, I want to tell you something. I feel I shall be happier if I have something to do. I want you to teach me to do something useful, to be busy in the house. You see it is my duty."

"O, my dear! You are not fit to do this sort of thing. You had better leave all that to me. You know I can't do anything better."

"Nor can I," said Dorla. "I am of no use to any one in the world, and am a torment to myself. O, don't say no to that; you don't know. But I am going to learn to be useful. You shall teach me to cook things. Let me see. Tomorrow morning we'll begin. You'll show me after breakfast, just how, to the very least thing, you get everything made for dinner, and I'm going to have a blank book—I'll take my new journal—I'm never going to use it any more—and write down everything. Yes—and we'll look over the towels, and sheets, and all the linen—and make lists. It's very good to have lists, isn't it? I think I've heard it was."

"I never had any," said Mrs. Rothermel, meekly. "I always remembered."

"O, I am sure *I* couldn't, and now I'm going to help about the housekeeping; don't you think it would be better?"

"Perhaps it would," Mrs. Rothermel said, with a little sigh, very much bewildered.

"Then we will have regular sets of everything, and give them out just so often. And don't you want me to

keep the accounts for you, mother? I could do that, you know."

"O, my dear, George does that; he always has done it since his father died."

"But I could relieve him, maybe."

"He likes it, my dear; I think it would trouble him to give it up, and he hasn't very much to do, you know."

Dorla sighed; she did not see that she was very much needed in the household, but she determined to keep up her effort, and talked and made plans till her mother, poor lady, was much oppressed by it. All this time she was trying not to hear the voices in the porch below: trying not to think that Felix was watching for her. When at last she heard the gate shut, and knew that he was gone, the relief was so great she could have cried. She had felt his nearness, and had held herself in such sharp tension, it was like resting after suffering.

The next morning she went about her plan of work. But, poor child, she had not much heart in it. She was so weary, and alas, so easily irritated. It seemed to her she hated all who came near her, even her dear, old mother. The details of her work were endless; she had never dreamed there were so many steps to be taken, so much work to be done about one paltry, simple, country meal. Six things to be remembered about making an insignificant custard, and ten, twenty, about stuffing and roasting a pair of fowls. And all the time her mother looked troubled, and the servants were quite thrown out of their course, and she knew she was very much in the way. But she persevered for several hours, and wrote down all the uninteresting details in her memorandum book, and made her head ache cruelly. She went to bed, and of course, could not eat any of the dinner, and it was so much less good than usual, owing to the many cooks, that George was a little out of temper.

•In the afternoon, he took her to drive; when they got

back, Tim told him Mr. Varian had been there to take him out with his "fast horse." Tim thought it a great pity he was out; he shared in George's admiration for the fast horse and Mr. Varian. Felix had given him some money, and Tim was not accustomed to the gifts of fortune. In the evening, George went to the village, not quite reconciled to the idea that Dorla was not well enough to go. He came back in high spirits, having evidently been patted on the back by the gay people, and full of messages for Dorla, inquiries and regrets. He was replete with gossip and plans of gaiety.

"Really, Dorla, you must exert yourself a little; we're falling all behind, my dear. You know you're always better for excitement. All you want is the energy to make the effort. I never saw you look better than you did last week, and you kept going all the time."

He had made an engagement to go out with Varian gunning in the morning; Varian would be down at nine o'clock, and they would be back to dinner, probably, at four. George was talking, as he pulled off his boots, about what had better be made for dinner, as if it was a very important matter.

"Something better than we had to-day, I hope," he said. "I'd never hold up my head again, if Varian chanced on such a wretched failure."

In the morning Dorla did not get up, and had a cup of tea brought to her room. The two men went away at half-past nine; she heard all the preparations, all the talking in the hall below; for everything was so still about the place, and the door would not keep out the sound. After they had gone, she got up and dressed, and went down to her weary lesson in the kitchen. This time she only looked on, and did not ask to give any practical assistance. At one o'clock she had a light dinner with her mother-in-law, the strength of the kitchen being reserved for the four o'clock repast, and at half-past three, according to a plan she had formed the



night before, she got into the pony-carriage, and drove herself towards Dingman's. George's last command had been that they should be ready for him at four. Mrs. Rothermel looked doubtful and unhappy at Dorla's going out, but that could not be helped. She should make the best of it to George, but she could not think what it all meant. To be sure Dorla was going on an errand of mercy, so to speak; but why she should not have chosen some other day and hour troubled her extremely.

Dorla got into the little carriage, shaking all over with fear. She was a coward, and she had no confidence in Jenny. Her lips were white, and her hands and feet were cold. She longed to take Tim at the last moment; but Tim had orders from George to be "on hand" at four o'clock, and besides the carriage held but two, and her present business was to take a sick girl out to drive. "If I break her neck it will be doubtful charity," thought Dorla, as she started down the hill, hardly seeing the way before her for her dazzled fear. But Jenny went very soberly, and before she reached the small house by the roadside, where the girl lived, she felt more steady in nerve.

This girl was the only object of charity poor Dorla could find in all the country. She had been faithful in her visits to her, rather over-doing the matter in fact; but what are people to do when the poor appear to have ceased out of the land? Nobody wanted anything; it was very hard on her. She was very glad there were so many ferns; but she would have liked a few poor people. These were her reflections when she was first acquainting herself with her new home. Melvina, as a sole object of her sympathy, was miserably uninteresting. She was very ill to be sure, but very wearisome in talking of her illness, very selfish, and possessing no fine feelings. She would not read the good little books Dorla brought her, but preferred illustrated papers and very common ones at that. She did not appreciate the bouquets Dorla made for her, and would eat things that were very in-

digestible. She did not dare to sing her hymns, for some of the family were always in the room, and were very undevotional. She finally gave up all attempts upon her soul, and confined herself to bringing her good things to eat, and taking her out to drive occasionally. This drive was a long promised and important one; many times it had been planned but the invalid had not been well enough to go. To-day was one of her good days, and she had sent word by the messenger that she would be ready. They were to go to Dingman's, cross the ferry, and spend the afternoon at the house of a married sister of the girl's in "Jersey," returning before evening.

It was quite an event in the family; poor Melvina had not been to her sister's in two years, and would in all probability never go again. She was feverishly excited (and rather cross) when Dorla drove up to the door. Her sharp-voiced mother, and her idle half-grown brothers and sisters shared in the excitement and the crossness. They did not treat Dorla with any particular courtesy or respect, after the manner of Americans on their native heath, and she always felt much abashed in their presence and not at all comfortable. She was very glad to get away.

"Now, Melvina, we are going to have a nice time," she said, cheerfully, as they started off.

"I don't know about that," said the girl, ungraciously. "If the sun comes out hot, it's sure to make my head ache awful; and I never liked those ferries."

Dorla laughed; Melvina must have such a funny code of manners, it amused her to think of persons who could as a rule, say such things to those who were bestowing favors on them. It grew rather tiresome after awhile, but there was, amid her fretfulness and the trouble occasioned by her really suffering state, an occasional touch of pathos in her eager interest in some land-mark, familiar and forgotten by those that passed it every day, in her evident strangeness to these scenes immediately surrounding her poor home. For three

years she had been bound to a bed of pain, in that wretched place, and had forgotten many details in all that weary time; how wide the river was at one point, how "scant" the brook seemed as they crossed the bridge over the Connesshaugh, how close the trees grew to the road. It gave Dorla a pang to think this was, with scarcely a doubt, the last earthly journey that the poor soul would ever go, and so unready for the unearthly one, alas. In her present state of feeling, Dorla could not think with sorrow of going, if only one were ready; a bitter tangled conflict, she was sick with fear of its results.

When they reached the river, and crossed on the rope ferry, she had to master her fears and stand by the horse's head, for poor Melvina was aghast at all the perils of the way, and wished herself home, without reserve. Jenny was much quieter than usual, and the duty of extending protection to Melvina had in some way strengthened her nerves; she was quite assured.

"Now that was not so bad," she said, as they drove up the green bank under the trees. "No accident ever has happened there, and you won't mind, going back, I'm sure." Melvina wasn't sure and said so. The road was very heavy, and the sun was very hot, but in the course of twenty minutes, they reached the farm house where the sister lived, and were made duly welcome by an irregular battalion of uncombed children and a yellow dog. Before Melvina was out of the carriage, the sister appeared, a hollow-chested, heavy-eyed, yellow-skinned woman, who was thirty, and looked forty-five. She devoted her life to the making of unwholesome pastry, and the copying of patterns out of fashion books, so that the lean kine who called her mother might go to the white meeting-house on the hill once a week, clothed with merino intricately braided, with Marabout feathers in their hats, and their stomachs filled with buckwheat cakes and doughnuts.

The children, in all stages of shabbiness, stood around, and

distracted their mother's attention from the poor sufferer; she could do nothing but apologize. They went into the house, into a wretched, damp, shut up "best room."

"O, don't," said poor Melvina, with a shudder. "Let's go into the sittin' room; she ain't one that minds."

Dorla urged this, and they went into the familiar well-used and not over-tidy room, where the sewing machine stood, at which the poor mother wore her life out in the manufacture of spurious finery for her ill-taught children. Then Dorla, to leave the sisters together, went out with the children to the orchard, and strayed on to the woods, and did not come back till the horn was blown for supper. This meal was so ill-cooked, and viciously evil, she could only pretend to partake of it, but Melvina ate voraciously and indiscriminately, and there were packed into the pony-carriage, for her further delectation, two jars of pickles, a bottle of maple syrup and some hideous fruit-cake.

There were many delays in starting; it was a good deal later than Dorla meant when they got off; and they crossed the much dreaded rope ferry in the grey of the twilight. It was about this time Melvina began to feel the reaction from the excitement of the visit, and possibly some protest of nature against the outrage that had been put upon her in the matter of the tea. She began to cry, and to say she felt sure that she was going to die. As nothing was more probable than that she would die soon, and suddenly, Dorla was in terror; it was a strange experience, driving along the dusky, lonely road, perhaps with Death as her companion. They met no one; and whenever anything was said about stopping for assistance at one of the straggling farm-houses near the road, the poor girl moaned and begged her to go on, to get her home before she died. She was plainly in great anguish, enduring one of those strange, nameless agonies, which seem to the sufferer like death, and are perhaps more terrible. Dorla was very inexperienced in sickness, and very sympathetic; she seemed standing at the very threshold of

the unknown, as she held the poor child in her arms, and tried to reassure her.

"It is so awful," moaned the sufferer, as she gasped for breath.

"What is so awful?" said her companion, longing to get the clue to her sensations.

"I don't know—everything—it's like going down—down—sinking away—it's a dark, dark place."

"And where is the pain you suffer most?" said Dorla, in her healthy ignorance.

"I don't have any pain," cried the girl, in a horror. "It's my feelings—it's something in me—it isn't my back and my head and all that. It's like being frightened, only there's nothing happened, and I never can get used to it."

"Were you ever so before," said Dorla. Yes, she had been so before, only this was worse. But then she said honestly, she always thought it was worse, and it never seemed just alike. Poor creature! The doctor being a strong healthy man, held these attacks in great contempt, and left chloral and other poison to be given to her, not because he thought her sufferings worthy even of this treatment, but to prevent the possibility of his comfortable sleep being broken up some night by a summons to her bedside. Her mother soon lost patience with her, never having had any experience that way herself; the children even ceased to mind when she was moaning and crying in her nameless agony, clutching some one by the wrist, and praying that they would not go away and leave her by herself. As she said, she never could get used to it. It was as awful now, as when it first came; there was always a fresh fearfulness spread over the old experience; she promised herself next time she would not be so frightened; but next time it was as bad or worse. She was unimaginative and ignorant; a very clod; if she had been a fine lady, she would have been counted full of affectation, and a hypocrite, trying to play on the sensibilities of those around her. When it came to

bearing a sharp pain, she was as good and dogged as anybody, and wanted to be "let alone;" but she cried out for human help when these attacks came on. That might have shown to any one of common sense that they were more real than reality itself, but it was her misfortune to be surrounded by very blunt, coarse people. Dorla, perhaps, was the first person who had entered with her into the cloud, and pitied her with all her tender soul, though as ignorant as they of the mysterious visitation. There was something in the close, firm grasp of her hand, the pity and gentleness of her voice, that gave her as much help as could be given by any one. She asked her no more questions, but acquiesced in the dire conflict, and assured her that she would stay by her till it was over, and that they would soon be home.

All this time, Jenny was going steadily and irreproachably, Dorla driving with one hand, and not always that; the twilight was long, but the road was very lonely. Bye and bye they met a wagon-load of men, laughing and shouting in drunken hilarity; there was still light enough to see them when they came side by side. Strange to say, they did not notice the little carriage, being in a tipsy wrangle about a seat. Dorla breathed freer when they were out of hearing. She was not afraid as she ordinarily was, but oppressed by some vague and mysterious dread, that made these more prosaic dangers dim. Still, the deepened twilight, and the solemn silence, and the distance from human help, all had their effect in awing her.

It seemed very, very long before the welcome light in the window of Melvina's home appeared. The poor girl was relieved by the sight for the moment, but her nervous suffering was too great to be forgotten long, and when they reached the gate, the little sister on the watch for them called out the unwelcome news to her mother, that Melvina had one of her bad "attacks." These "attacks" always roused a spirit of rebellion in the tender mother; she flounced and jerked a good deal, for a Florence Nightingale, and put her

lips together in a steely manner. After the delinquent had been got into the house and into her bed, she tossed some chloral into a glass, which she had to drink "at her peril." Then she warned Mrs. Rothermel she'd better go, as Melvina needed quiet, and Melvina told her briefly that she had, being quite cowed by her mother. When she got to the door, however, the poor thing called her back and whimpered a good deal, but the mother was peremptory. She did not want to be kept up all night; it might be the case if the blessed chloral was not allowed to do its work. So Dorla had to go, with the consent again of Melvina, who called her back the second time to make her promise in a whisper, that she'd come to her if she sent for her any time when she was "bad," even if it were at night.

A small urchin, with tan-colored hair, no color now in the dimness, had been holding Jenny's head. When Dorla got into the carriage and took the reins, she called him up close to her, and asked him in a low tone if he wouldn't be very good to his poor sister, who was so sick and suffering; and he laughed and seemed to think it was a good joke, and said "that wasn't much;" but maybe he was impressed.

Dorla shuddered, and drove away. They all seemed brutes to her, and poor Melvina's strait a frightful one. She forgot how irritable and unlovely the creature really was; all her heart had gone out to her, since she had been the companion of her sufferings, and since she had clung to her so pitifully. The reality of the great end, the strange nearness and yet distance of the unknown life to come, filled her with solemn thought. She forgot the lateness of the hour, the loneliness.

The horse was going on at her own pace. Just at the ascent of a little hill, from the path beside the road, some one seemed to come out from the darkness, almost upon her, before either were aware. Dorla started, and repressed a low cry.

"Mrs. Rothermel," said a voice, and Felix stood by the

side of the carriage. Jenny halted, maybe it was because she was glad of any excuse going up the hill; maybe her mistress' start had reacted on the reins; maybe she thought it was good manners to stop when any one came up to talk to people in the carriage.

"I'm glad to find you safe," he said, hurriedly. "It is very late for you to be out all alone."

"Is it," said Dorla, strangely, coming back into her world. "I do not mind it now. I wasn't thinking about being frightened."

"But you ought to mind—it is not right, it is not safe," he said, in a sort of wrath, as people worked up by suspense and search are apt to speak. "It should not be allowed—I am astonished—I—it is wild, this sort of carelessness—you don't know the danger yourself, but others ought to know it for you. Promise me you won't do this again."

"I can't do that," said Dorla slowly, thinking of her promise to poor Melvina to go to her "any time" if she was very bad. She thought it not unlikely she might be called to her again this very night, and she should surely go.

"You cannot!" he said under his breath. "Then it is because—"

"It is because," she said quickly, taking the words from him, "it is because I have promised a poor sick girl to go to her when she needs me. And she might send at night."

"But you need not go alone."

"No, only it might happen."

"But you don't know the danger. A crowd of drunken men passed down this road not half an hour ago."

"They did not even look at me," said Dorla with a little scorn.

"You are almost like a child," said Felix, hotly. And the sight of his anger, which had come of his solicitude and suspense, smote Dorla with a terrible and dangerous pang. A strange spasm came about her throat; she was frightened now. Felix stood close by the carriage step. She



knew in another moment he would get in beside her and be her companion through the two miles that lay between her and her home. With a sudden resolution, she touched the reins.

"Good-night, if it is so late," she said, in a smothered voice, and drove away, leaving him standing bewildered by the roadside. She could almost see the fire that leapt from his eyes as he drew back.

"It is best," she said to herself, again and again, "it is best that I should offend him—that I should seem rude and ungentle to him, hardly like a lady." But all the same it left her heart as sore and wounded as if it had not been best.

When Dorla reached the house, she was met by George, who seemed to be waiting for her at the gate. He met her with much mild affection, and said she was very late and he had begun to be uneasy.

"Didn't you meet Varian?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Why didn't you bring him back with you? He went to look for you."

"Why didn't you come for me yourself?" said Dorla, almost fiercely, as she got out of the carriage.

"I? Why Tucker had just come in to see me about the winter wheat, and I had to attend to him, and Varian said he'd go, he seemed so restless walking up and down the path, and so he went. I knew of course you were all right."

Dorla went into the house, her brain in a tumult; she did not stay to listen to his justification. "He will be coming back," she said to herself, "and George will watch for him, and speak to him, and bring him in. Where shall I hide myself?"

But she need have had no apprehension. Felix was striding across the fields, as far from the house as he could go, angry and bitter, trying to make himself believe he never would speak to her again.

The next day was a long one; Dorla had one of her frightful headaches. She lay on the bed with the room darkened till you could not see your way across it, and nobody must speak a loud word, or shut a door in less than five minutes. She hated acutely and viciously every one in the world, Felix included. The highest virtue that she could set for herself was to be silent when any one came near her. Every vein ran fire; she felt as if liquid pain circulated through her entire body once in every two minutes. She did not care what went on outside her room; people might smoke their cigars now and wait for her; might live and love and die, and she was indifferent and more. But she was young and vigorous, and these headaches lasted a less time than they did with older women. At night she almost always slept, worn out by the horrid battle, and the next morning awoke, pale and languid and depressed, but in no suffering. As the day wore on, she would gradually regain her tone of nerve, her appetite, her interest in what went on around her, recovering in a day what would have been the work of a week with a less healthy woman.

It was on the third day; she had gone out about five in the afternoon, to sit under the trees near the gate, still pale and weary, but as it were awakening. She had almost forgotten Felix, she had been so occupied with herself, poor thing. She had not heard his name, and did not know whether he had been at the house. She had a book in her hand, but she could not read; her eyes had a sore hurt feeling, from the pain of the two days past, and so she sat idle, with her hands in her lap, two fingers between the pages that she had not energy to read, her head leaned back against the tree under which she sat. She heard the sound of wheels, and looking up, along the road not ten feet from her, passed what, for her peace, she had better not have seen! It was Felix, in his high wagon, driving his fast horse; and beside him sat a young woman, one whom Dorla had never seen

before, as young as Dorla herself, and prettier perhaps. She had light hair, and wore a charming sort of French hat, all white chip, and blue bows and pink roses. She looked as if she had come down off a Dresden vase, to dazzle poor sick Dorla's sight, and to carry away Felix from her. It is surprising how much you can see in a minute; but if you are looking with all your senses as Dorla was, you can carry away a pretty strong impression. Felix was leaning towards this pink and blue divinity; she had all the coquetry and complacency imaginable in her face as she half turned from him, but only half. During the moment in which they had flashed before her gaze, she felt that she had read the whole story. They were so absorbed that the young lady did not see her at all. Felix as an after thought, an interruption, turned his head in the direction of the house, saw her, and lifted his hat. The gesture caught his companion's attention, she started and turned to look at whom he bowed, but it was too late, for they were already past the house.

Dorla started up, and in a sort of anger hurried to the house, trembling all over.

"They will be coming back in a few minutes, and they shall not see me," she cried to herself. These headaches leave one petulant and childish. Dorla flung herself upon her bed and cried. "I only want to be left alone," she said. "Why did he come this way? I want him to be happy, but I want to be let alone myself. I don't want to see him, I don't want to hear about him. I don't want to be tortured in this way forever. O, if George would only take me away from here awhile!" Then she wished the headache back. If it had only been yesterday, she would not have cared.

Bye and bye they came back; she heard the wheels a long way off down the road, and she sprang up and started to the window, and then went back as suddenly, and pressed her hands before her eyes. For she had bound herself by a vow never to look at him voluntarily. If she had looked,

she would have seen he gazed intently towards the house this time, and that he drove slowly while he passed it, and that his companion looked a shade less radiantly happy. But she did not look; poor, frantic, petulant child, she tried to say her prayers, but she did not feel much like praying. Fortunately, to have our prayers heard it is not always necessary to feel like praying; else the devil would only have to stir us up with some temptation and take our arms away.

The next day at dinner, George said, "I've heard a piece of news." And Dorla knew what the news was as soon as he had said the words. She turned rather white; but she had gone a long way since Felix drove by with the pink and blue enchantress in the afternoon sunshine of yesterday. She was not jealous any more, only a little bitter, and very much ashamed and humbled.

"Varian has plunged into a violent flirtation, and they think it is in earnest now. This is an old flame; somebody he met in Europe. They say she has followed him up, and doesn't mean to let him slip. Harriet is quite excited."

"Does she like her?" Dorla said, quite calmly.

"Yes, I believe so. At any rate she seems much pleased, and Mrs. Varian has quite set her heart upon it. She has a good deal of money, and it is altogether just the thing for him."

"I shouldn't think the Varians needed money urgently," said Dorla, coldly, putting some sauce upon the plate of pudding that she handed to her husband.

"I don't suppose they do, but the more people have the more they always want, I've noticed." And he said it as if nobody had ever said it before him. Seeing Dorla somewhat interested, he went on to tell her her rival's name, her age, what people said about her, how Felix had shown his devotion, how the family were showing theirs.

"And we ought to do something for them," said George,

deeply convinced that he owed a duty to society. "That *fête* now; something to make it pleasant for her."

"O, spare me!" cried Dorla, with a hard ring in her voice, pushing back her chair, and making a little gesture of protestation with her hands. She could not help thinking this fortunate young woman had enough to make it pleasant for her already. George resigned his plate of pudding (he was something of a gourmand, and it cost him quite an effort), and got up and followed Dorla, who had arisen from the table. He wanted to get her up to the point of doing something in the way of entertainment.

"The Varians have done a great deal for you, Dorla," he said, insinuatingly. "I can't help thinking it would be well to make them some return."

"I am not overwhelmed with gratitude for what they've done for me," she answered, standing in the door of the hall with her back to him, and looking moodily out into the sunny yard.

"Well, I am, if you are not," he said, with a little feeble pomp. "They have shown me great courtesy ever since they knew me; and I feel a desire to offer them some hospitality. This is just the occasion; here is this young lady who, in all probability, is engaged to Felix, or soon will be. She is a stranger here; of course, it's very dull for her in this quiet little place. She has just come from Newport, and must feel the difference."

"Why did she come then, if she objects to quietness and littleness? She must like it, or she would not stay."

"I didn't say she didn't like it; but that is not the point. The point is that the Varians want to entertain her, and help the thing along, and we have it in our power to give them some assistance. Now, I am not speaking from conjecture; Harriet said as much to me this morning."

"She did?" cried Dorla, quite virago-like, turning round upon him. "She did? then you may say to her, she may wait a long while for me to ask her here. I have had

enough of Harriet Varian. She had better leave me alone. That is all I ask."

George essayed to look profoundly shocked, but did look, in reality, very angry.

"You are talking very strangely," he said with dignity, "and I do not understand you."

"I do not expect you to," she said briefly.

"You are quarrelling with your best friends," he resumed stiffly, "and that does not look well for you."

"Heaven knows I haven't so many that I can indulge in quarrelling for the pleasure of it," cried Dorla, bitterly.

"Well, that is just what you are doing," said her husband.

"No," she said suddenly, with a softening of her voice; "no, George, I find no pleasure in it, and I do not want to quarrel with *you* ever. Harriet Varian is not my friend, and has only done me injury. If I had never seen her I should be a happier woman. She is dangerous, self-willed and capricious. She only lives for pleasure, and uses recklessly all who will be used by her. She has no depth of feeling, no refinement; she would sacrifice anybody's happiness for an afternoon's amusement. All that gives her any power or consequence, is her strong self-will, and her abundant money. Why should we have anything to do with such a woman as that? She is below us, George; it is a degradation."

"I don't know about that," said George, uncomfortably, a little overwhelmed with his wife's force of speech. "The world would not agree with you."

"Why should we care for that? I hope we are not living for it."

George, who was profoundly, smally, worldly, winced a little and said of course they were not living for it. Still, people had their duties to society, and so on, back to the cherished subject of the fête. He had an uncomfortable

consciousness that he was not having the best of it, and that added a shade of acrimony to his tone.

"Ask me anything else, George," cried Dorla at length with entreaty. "I will do anything else; but to go through all that preparation—to have them here for hours upon my hands,—I think it would almost kill me; indeed you don't know what you ask."

"Well, then," said George, a little mollified, "I won't say anything more about it now, if you will promise me one thing. And that is, to go out, as you did before this strange fit came upon you."

"How do you mean? How often?" said Dorla, falteringly.

"As often as I may desire it," returned her husband, loftily. "I should think a wife's duty was plain enough in such a matter."

Dorla flushed and was silent awhile; then she said in a low voice, "I am willing to go whenever I have no headache—whenever you think me well enough."

"It is for your own good," said her husband, now feeling the balance turning in his favor. "It is because it is best for you. I myself care very little for these things."

Dorla was silent; she was not angry, only ashamed of him, now, and it is so much easier to control your speech when the case is such.

He resolved to put her sincerity to an early test; but in the meantime as business called him to go away for a night, he contented himself with telling her he wanted her to drive him to Port Jervis for the 5.30 train, if she had no objection. She had an objection, a bitter one. The only way lay through the village, the cruel little village, and she hated the sight and thought of it. Couldn't Tim take him?

"No," coldly, "Tim was off in the fields with the men."

"Very well," said Dorla, feeling she had not begun her walk of submission gracefully.

George was beginning to relish the sweets of sovereignty. It is truly a luxury to make a person yield to you, who in your heart you know is your superior. Dorla was so conscientious; he began to see what a beautiful string it would be to harp upon, "a wife's duty." It was a hook in her nose and a bridle on her jaws. "Ha! a wife's duty!" Still he was very fond of her. But he was very small, and Harriet had sneered a little at him for not doing more as he thought fit himself.

The drive to Port Jervis was not a very happy one. George was lofty, and loftiness is not becoming to insignificant people. He was full of his new resolutions and of the necessity of taking a stand.

The village at half-past four in the afternoon is quite deserted; but Dorla breathed freer when they were out of it. They had left some orders at a shop, but had seen no one save the clerk there, and only stable boys and maids and children as they passed the hotels. It was fifteen minutes past five when they reached the bridge at Matamoras.

"You won't want me to drive you any further?" she said, taking it for granted he would cross the bridge on foot as he had often done, and walk the trifling distance to the station.

"I think I should prefer your driving me across," he said, with unwonted decision in his voice. "It's a hot afternoon and my valise is heavy."

"Couldn't you get a boy to carry it," said Dorla. "There is one playing by the bridge. It will be so late for me to get home; and besides I am always afraid of Jenny near the train."

"There is not the slightest danger," answered the supreme gentleman. "I wish you to get used to driving; I should not have bought a horse for you that was not entirely safe."

Dorla bit her lips, and drove up on the bridge. That



was just one thing she could do; she could obey him, if she could not love him. But it is surprising how intolerable apparently harmless people grow to be when you are married to them. George had seemed to her four months ago, grave, quiet, handsome, anything you please; and here he was small, meddling, tyrannical, contemptible. What was she to do about it? It was maddening to owe him obedience, loyalty, love, and to think of the long years to come.

The river as you cross the bridge at Matamoras is sometimes very pretty in the afternoon; it looks calm and deep and the hills make a dark corner to the picture. Dorla was saying to herself, I wish I were lying at the bottom of it among the stones and slime. And George was saying aloud, he wished her to call upon the Varians the next day without any fail. Somehow between her teeth she gave a promise that she would; and George felt comfortably elate.

Port Jervis is a grimy, miserable place, at least the portion of it that the wayfarer from Milford traverses. There are all sorts of evil smells and a vile sort of city squalor that is sickening to look upon in summer, just crossing the river from such verdure and sweetness. It sickened Dorla's very soul; she longed to get away from it, but she must go on. Bye and bye came the hotels, and the railways, and beyond, the station.

"Shall I leave you here?" she said, pulling up Jenny by the side door of the Delaware House, where he generally alighted.

"No," he said, with affected nonchalance. "You may drive me across to the depot."

Now the depot lies across the street, two or three hundred feet wide; and this street is laced and threaded by railway tracks; and there is hardly a moment, day or night, when an engine is not puffing and snorting up or down it, or a sharp bell ringing, or a whistle blowing, or a red flag being waved in warning. To be accurate, one hundred and forty-two trains go out of Port Jervis every day; and they

are making ready to go always. Dorla felt her heart give a great plunge; was not this more than she could do? This street was her terror; she had often dreamed of it at night. And though she had, eight minutes before, wished herself among the stones and slime of the river-bed, she was mortally afraid of Jenny and the engines. So contradictory is human nature. She would have gone down on her knees to George to get him to let her off from this; she even began to whimper, and to tremble, and to plead, for she was a thorough coward. But it is possible George did not hear what she said, for there was a good deal of noise and clatter all around them, and besides, he saw in the distance, on the platform of the depot, a rival counsellor-at-law, before whose envious eyes he wished to make parade of his pretty wife, and his natty little pony carriage.

"Quick, Dorla, quick; drive on, don't you hear what I say?"

Dorla heard; and what her courage wouldn't do, her conscience did do for her. She must obey him, if she died for it; that she never doubted. She managed to keep her hands closed over the reins, but they had about as much power in them as a baby's, and she saw absolutely nothing from the white glare and light that excitement made before her eyes. Somehow they crossed the tracks and reached the platform, but not until George had snatched the reins and guided the horse to where he wished to stop, with a suppressed exclamation of annoyance. He had caught a sardonic smile on the lips of the rival counsellor. He got out, swelling<sup>d</sup> with wrath; and took his valise, and bade Dorla look what she was doing, and almost forgot to say good-bye.

Dorla tried to look; but alas, a wandering engine snorted suddenly down the track; Jenny gave a plunge and she gave a scream quite simultaneously; instead of holding the reins, she clasped her hands before her face not to see the destruction that was coming; and with reins flapping they

went flying across the track, to the great horror of all beholders, escaping the engine, but apparently bent on a thorough run away.

Fortunately among the loungers on the steps of the hotel was a man of nerve and good judgment. He caught Jenny by the bridle as she passed, and hung on manfully till she came to a stand-still. He was a stage driver and he knew a good deal about horses, and he soothed her till she was quiet, and then turned his attention to the young driver. Quite a little crowd had gathered round her, on the outskirts of which was her husband. He soon made his way up to her, and reproved her mildly for her carelessness and cowardice.

"I know it," she said, "but George I am afraid to drive her home. *Please* get somebody to go with me."

"Nonsense," returned George, "she is as quiet as a lamb, and you were enough to frighten any horse, screaming as you did. She has behaved better than I ever hoped." This he believed; but he wanted everybody to believe it too, for he had pretty much made up his mind to sell her in the fall, and a rumor of this sort of business would be money out of pocket. The bystanders agreed that it was no fault of "the pony's." And so after a little chaffing and chatting, they gradually dispersed, and the whistle blew for George's train and he "dispersed" too, telling Dorla, as he hurried away, that she must drive on alone, and that she must look what she was about, and get used to all this sort of thing. After he had gone, and she was preparing tremblingly to start, the good-natured stage-driver came up and said there was a lad who was going up in the stage, who'd be very glad to drive for her if she wanted him. That was a great temptation; Dorla would have given all she had in the world to have had him do it; but George had said she was to go alone, and that made an end of it for her. She thanked the man and shook her head, and started off on her terrible journey. When she crossed the bridge she didn't wish she was lying at the bottom of the river; she felt more

like clinging to life, with both poor weak hands: it didn't seem to her there was anything else worth having; George and his hatefulness had faded out of sight, and the great temptation of Felix. If she could only get home safe! that was all she asked.

But before she got to the outskirts of Matamoras, it became evident that there was something wrong with Jenny. She fidgetted and put back her ears, and moved uneasily in her harness, and finally—appalling symptom—began to make strange motions with her hind legs. Dorla gave a piercing shriek at this last gesture, and sprang out of the carriage on the turf. Fortunately they were going very slow, and Jenny had got used to “this sort of thing,” and didn't start. A boy and a man saw her, and came up. The man examined the harness, and said it wasn't any wonder; a strap was broken, and the carriage was pressing on her heels, and in a few minutes more she would have run no doubt. Dorla shook all over at this piece of news, and actually began to cry. The man was melted, and tried his best to cheer her. His boy should take the pony back to “Port,” and have the trouble remedied; while she should wait at his house, and his wife should get her a cup of tea, and make her comfortable. This accordingly was done. The tea was very poor, but the good nature was very comforting. But, alas, for the flight of time. It was half-past six when the boy started on his errand; it was a quarter to eight when he appeared in sight on his return. Everyone knows what harness-makers and blacksmiths are, in the matter of delays; and perhaps the poor fellow got an unjust scolding. But there was a travelling “show” across the river, and it was his father's opinion he had spent full half the time he had been gone in its vicinity. It is not quite dark at a quarter to eight in August, but it is much nearer to it than is sometimes pleasant.

“You're not afraid?” said the man, putting the reins into her hands after she was seated,

"No-o," she said with her teeth chattering. "You don't think there's any danger, now the harness is all right?"

"Not the least bit in the world," he said most assuringly.

And so she started on again. How fast it grew dark! And how many noises she heard, in the loneliest parts of the road; people driving behind her a long, long way, and then passing her very suddenly; men, horrid strange men, laughing and smoking, and looking back at her. She had never before known how few houses there were between Matamoras and Milford; great stretches of lonely fields, and of lonelier darker woods. Jenny, however, behaved better, and had ceased all aggressive action of her hind legs. Dorla thought she would have liked a horse without those horrible hind legs; they came so near the carriage, and were capable of so much.

It was as dark as midnight, when she drove into the village; the moon had not risen, and the sky was clouded. It was very comforting to see lights streaming from houses, and to hear people's voices, and to know you could make somebody hear yours if there were any need. The things for which she had left an order at the store, had to be called for. This became a serious matter as she drew near that place. For there was a dense crowd all about the open space, between the stone building and the hotels, where the roads cross; and a great flaring light held high aloft, made quite a startling spectacle. It was a vender of quack medicine, who had adopted this method of attracting notice, and of selling his wares, and getting his verses listened to. He had counted wisely upon the unoccupied condition of the minds in Milford; gentle and simple, old and young, wise and foolish, had gone running out to swell the crowd about him. The hotel parlors were emptied, and the piazzas bare.

The effect, as has been said, was picturesque, the night was dark, and the crowd gay in clothing and varied, and the great torch shed its waving light and smoke down on

them, now doubtfully, now broadly. Dorla could neither get up to the door of the store, nor past the crowd on her way home; she tried to approach the store, but Jenny could see nothing picturesque in the effect. On the contrary she was very much put about by what she saw, and began to start and rear and justify Dorla in a very frightened scream. Somebody from the edge of the crowd started forward and seized her by the bridle; and led her to the side of the road in front of the store and quieted her gradually. This time it was Felix, and not the stage-driver; which was more appropriate. Dorla shook all over, and tried to get out of the carriage, but actually could not. Another person came out of the crowd and offered her assistance. And this one was young Davis.

"Mrs. Rothermel!" he cried, "out at this hour alone! What are you doing here, and what is there that I can do for you?"

"Get the clerk to bring out the things I ordered," was all she could say, sinking back into her seat. Mr. Davis went briskly into the store and gave the desired directions and came back. During this time Felix stood by Jenny's head, and engaged himself in keeping her quiet, not saying a word to Dorla. Several others, having got enough of the quack doctor's rhymes, and recognizing Dorla, came about the carriage. For some reason, Harriet was not among them; Dorla caught sight of her a little way off, with the pink and blue Dresden china beauty; they both seemed to watch her but did not approach. It was enough for Dorla that she was there. She could not see anything else. Felix had just left them, it was evident, and they were waiting for his return. The torch of the quack doctor seemed bent on illuminating her blonde hair if nothing else. Dorla saw her and tried to look away and saw her still, though all else seemed in darkness.

Mrs. Bishop kissed her and talked to her a good deal; Miss Grayson and Miss Davis made much lamentation that

they never saw her now. (She was no longer a rival and they were quite affectionate.) Miss Whympie even had come to Christian sentiments about her, and begged she would come down and play croquet sometimes. And worst of all, Mr. Davis had quite an easy semi-flirtatious manner, as if he knew she would be only too glad of some attention from him now. It was all like a dream to her; she hoped afterwards that she had answered questions properly and not said or done anything unwise, but she could remember very little but that after the packages were stored away under the seat, young Davis had said quite confidently, "Now I'm going to drive you home," and Mrs. Bishop had said, "Yes, my dear, I shall insist upon it," and Mr. Davis had stepped into the carriage without more permission and Felix had lifted his hat and walked away to join his sister and her companion.

It was a great relief to see the reins in a man's hands, and not be afraid of everything they passed; but she was so full of annoyance and regret at the meeting with Felix, she could not much enjoy the sweets of protection. It was bitter to feel he must be angry with her, and despise her too; be angry with her for driving out alone at night when he had been so vehement against it; and despise her for permitting young Davis' familiar ways. To be letting him drive her home alone at night. She knew that he would boast of it like a young simpleton as he was, and that he would make it understood he was always most welcome at the farm-house. And Felix would think that she was jealous, and that this was her way of revenge. When if he only knew how she had brought herself to feel about it—that she prayed for him all the time, that she had almost felt thankful for her bitter mistake about him, since it had humbled her so utterly; and had left him unharmed, and ready for his present happiness. If it only had not come so soon! These and other thoughts like it, were filling her mind while young Davis' unmeaning prattle hurtled about

her ears. When they reached the farm-house, they were met by Tim and two men with lanterns, and dear old Mrs. Rothermel in misery of spirit. Dorla reassured her, and explained a few of her misfortunes to her. Young Davis came in, as she knew he would, and stayed till half-past ten o'clock. The weariness of it. What could he have found to entertain him?

He had his full reward, however, as in making his entrance to the hotel at five minutes before eleven, he met Felix, pacing moodily up and down the flags, with his cigar. He was sure, from his manner, that Felix was enraged, and this was as nectar to his youthful spirit.

**H**ARRIET VARIAN, the next morning, was just bustling out of the hotel, with an armful of books and music and work, to go over to the cottage, when she was confronted by Dorla, whom she did not see till within a few inches of her.

"O," she said, pulling herself up, a little confused. "How are you? Coming to see us?"

"Yes," said Dorla, "and Miss Florence Estabrook."

"O," cried Harriet, rather more embarrassed. "That is very good of you, Dorla, I am sure. We're all over at the cottage. You'd better come straight over with me now."

While they walked across the dusty road, Harriet talked a great deal, even more than usual, but Dorla did not even hear her. She was approaching this dreaded moment with the sort of feeling young martyrs carry to the stake. A morning call, in a many-flounced white muslin dress; but she might have had a halo round her head. She was submitting humbly to the order of the poor tyrant to whom she owed obedience; she was going to pay her homage to the woman who had supplanted her, and to touch her hand and to give her friendship if she would have it, and her



prayers always, always, whether she cared for them or not. All this was the highest idea of duty that she could form. She hoped it would be accepted as an atonement for her sin, which looked darker and more shameful than ever to her. She desired to humble herself to the very earth; to punish herself with a real punishment; and it was in accomplishment of this desire that she walked beside Harriet across the dusty street towards the shady, shabby little cottage.

Harriet was manifestly ill at ease; but the manifestation was lost to Dorla; she heard not a word that she was saying, but followed her silently through the little gate.

The group within the parlor gave no idea of the paradise that Dorla had been picturing; but that, too, was lost to her. She was in a sort of trance, as nearly as that state can be reached by intense excitement long continued, arriving at its climax. Felix sat in a lounging attitude, at the door, which opened upon the little porch. He had a paper in his hand, but looked moody and uninterested. At the piano, opposite the door, sat Miss Estabrook with a very discontented face, and at the farthest window was Mrs. Varian, with a lap full of gay colored embroidery, but with a novel in her hand.

Everyone was startled, and changed attitude and expression sharply, as Dorla entered. She passed Felix with a movement of her head that showed she knew he was there, but she did not look at him, and crossed over and spoke to Mrs. Varian, who said, flurriedly,

"My dear! This is unexpected. You haven't been here in such a time, you know!" Then, without answering, she went across to Miss Estabrook, who had arisen and whose face was a little flushed. She answered Dorla's salutation and took her hand, but in a manner that was missish and pert, in contrast with the action of the other. She hardly knew what she said. There was not much to say, and she had not meant to say much. But she had hoped to see something in the face of this fancied rival that she could

love—that would show her capable of understanding that she offered her her friendship. But that something was not there, that understanding did not dawn. With all her longing she could only see a very pretty woman, young, but not soft and tender, rather hard and superficial, and withal ill at ease and almost defiant.

All this she could not comprehend. And Felix sat beside the door, with his moody now almost fiery eyes fixed upon the group. Miss Estabrook sitting even on the piano stool, looked petite and unimpressive opposite her visitor—modish, overdressed, contrasted with her. Dorla looked taller than ever, and not so slight, in her soft white ruffled dress. The low room had seemed suffocating to her as she came into it, and she had taken off her hat and held it by her side as she sat on the old haircloth sofa, opposite her rival.

Slightly bending forward towards her, Felix saw her in profile; no color about her, even her hat was one of those white chip affairs covered with tulle and without a flower or ribbon. Her face was colorless, she was probably much less beautiful than usual.

Harriet felt the thunder in the air when she glanced from her to Felix; Madame even felt that something must be done. Before the end of the short visit, and before Dorla had arisen, Harriet had hurriedly reviewed the situation, and resolving desperately to get Felix off, had said to him *sotto voce* something about some bill or some business at the hotel which she wished he could see about before she wrote her letters. It is not certain exactly what he said to her in answer; the answer was *sotto voce* too. But it was something that made her redden very much and look as much abashed as she could look. She had done her little possible, and now the ship might go foundering on, she felt she could not be responsible.

Dorla, strangely, saw and felt none of this murky and electric atmosphere, being too much absorbed in her own false view of things.

As she rose to go, Mrs. Varian rose also and said, hastily, "Felix, I see James crossing over towards the stables, will you just step over and speak to him about that harness, and show him what you mean to have him do about it? He will be off to the blacksmith's, and no getting hold of him again all the morning."

That was very weak; but even sensible women do weak things when they are driven into such a corner. "Mrs. Rothermel will excuse you, I am sure," she added, flurriedly.

"I am sure she would if it were necessary," Felix said, having risen also. "But there will be ample time to speak to James when he comes back for his dinner."

"At any rate," said Mrs. Varian, desperately, "tell him I want to speak to him if you please. There have been no arrangements made about the afternoon; we shall be disappointed in our drive. You know we want the horses fully an hour earlier than usual."

"Certainly," returned Felix, touching sharply a bell beside him, and almost before the reverberation died away, the maid appeared. "Tell James, Mrs. Varian wants to speak to him." By this time Dorla had begun to feel the surcharged atmosphere; she had said good-bye to Miss Estabrook, and looked frightened into Mrs. Varian's face, and then put out her hand to Harriet.

"O," said the latter, hurriedly, "I'll go over with you to the pony. Where was it that you left her?"

"Don't trouble yourself to do that, the sun is very hot," said Felix, "I will put Mrs. Rothermel in her carriage."

And Harriet, self-willed as she was, could do nothing but stand back and say disjointedly, "Well, if you can, that is, I won't go, of course, if you mean to; I suppose it is warm. Good-bye then, Dorla, you must come again."

"Thank you," said Dorla, faintly, as she followed Felix through the gate.

Come again! O, if she had not come this time. What had she done. What strangely moving, changing world was

she standing in. Why must she make such terrible mistakes. What did it all mean? Something was very very wrong. They crossed the dusty, hot little street in silence, Dorla not lifting her white dress, Felix not putting up the umbrella in his hand. I am afraid they were not thinking much about such things. When they reached the sidewalk opposite, Felix said, in a constrained voice,

"I hope you got home safely last night?"

Dorla rather caught her breath and said. "Yes, and oh, that is what I wanted to say to you. It was an accident my being out so late. I should have been at home by half-past six, but something happened to the harness. It was not my fault at all. I hope you will not think I meant—that is—I never mean to do what isn't right. I was afraid myself. I did not want to be out any more than you could want—I don't mean that you care—but as you spoke to me I thought you would think it very strange that I should do it just the same at once."

Poor Dorla! It would have been a great deal better if she had not come. What troubles these people, all conscience and emotion, do get into. She did not know exactly what she had done, but she felt a strange unsettling of everything, and a sense of danger. There was a silence. They had nearly reached the hotel steps.

"Won't you let me drive you home?" said Felix, in a low tone, but such a tone. Then Dorla knew that the work was all undone, that the battle was all to be fought over, and that she had fallen back in the cruel toils again. How much a tone can say—how inconsiderable the words. Felix said to her under cover of those seven trifling words, that he had thrown away his mask, that the last few days had been all deceit, that he was hungering for a word from her, for a moment with her. That he never could forget, and never meant to let her forget, what those few short gay days had taught them. That he entreated her for this one respite;

that he pleaded for this one morning's heaven. Poor Dorla! She was in no danger of not understanding.

"Tim is driving me," she said, when she could command her voice.

The pony carriage stood a little distance down the street, under the shade of some trees. They both saw it, and walked down towards it without speaking again. But what a thick, hot silence; what a struggle that was not interpreted by words. Tim was nodding over the reins, but he sprang up when they came up by him, and turned the pony off that Dorla might get in. She did not take Felix's hand when she got in, but put her own on the side of the seat, and stepped in quickly, and without looking at him. She said something that might have been good-bye, as they drove off. But Felix was not dissatisfied. On the contrary, he was madly full of assurance, and of triumph.

And now began an epoch in his life, that his admiring historian surely would suppress. He had, till this time, kept before himself some idea of duty, some sentiment of respect for what the world might think of her, if not of him. He had striven to veil the feelings with which she had inspired him, with mistiness and vagueness in his own mind. He had been very wretched, very moody; but he had not been definite. Now he was definite. Now he knew what he craved. Now he stood on the border of the land that he meant to enter. He knew that this woman loved him; *that* she could not escape from. He had never existed before, it seemed to him. His whole life looked pale, and faint, and like a play, compared to this. He put aside every consideration of duty, of self-respect, of honor. He asked only her. He knew all that stood between them. Not the paltry man, whom he disdained to associate in his thoughts with her; not the ostracism of society—that looked like nothing to him at his mad height of passion. Not the law of God. Alas, that had never had great weight in his decisions. Nothing but this woman's conscience, her religion.

This was standing between them, and this alone, as he looked at it. How to overcome it; how to reach her through that panoply. He knew she was not a strong woman, as strength is counted. She was very inexperienced; she was timid, she was very young. She had before now allowed herself to be led, to be guided; she had made great mistakes. He was too insane to care what he gave up, what disgrace he brought upon himself by his pursuit, either successful or a failure, and too selfish to reflect upon the fatal injury it would do to her, in any case. He was not new at selfishness. He had been taught all his life that it was the thing he ought to be, and though he had resisted it in small things, from a good nature and from amiability, still it had governed him openly in the great matters of his life. It would have been asking too much, that it should not have been at the helm now.

A week followed this, a week of chagrin and alarm to Harriet and Mrs. Varian, of scandal and eager gossip among the lookers-on; of terror and suffering to poor Dorla. Florence Estabrook had been thrown over as recklessly as she had been taken up. Felix made no disguise of his indifference to her. Harriet dared not remonstrate, she was afraid of him. One interview had been enough for her. "This wretched complication" was what she called it when she talked about it with her mother. She might have felt a little remorse if she had been in the habit of the sentiment. But she wasn't, and only felt out of patience with Dorla, as the cause of all the trouble to their peace.

"What did she marry that fool of a fellow for!" she pettishly exclaimed. "If she had only waited another year till Felix came back, she might have had him and welcome. I don't care how he marries if he is moderately respectable."

"And doesn't interfere with you in any way," said the mother, whose heart, what there was of it, was always with her son.

"Very likely he wouldn't have wanted her if he could have had her though," Harriet went on.

"Very likely not. But that doesn't alter matters now."

"I only wish this Estabrook girl was off our hands. He has treated her abominably; what will people say?"

"She brought it on herself. Who asked her to come here?" said the hard old woman. But for Dorla, she was a little sorry; the poor child was so pretty, and so gentle, she had always liked her, and she knew very well that all the fault was on the part of Felix. It was rather a chagrin to think what a daughter she might have had in her. For worldly as she was, she knew very well how comfortable and sweet, good pious women make the home in which they happen to abide. "A miserable complication," that was all she could say about it. "Miserable and so unnecessary."

The week was drawing to a close, and Felix worn out and baffled by his ill success in even seeing Dorla, was humbler by many degrees, and less assured than when he parted from her at the step of the pony carriage, in the hot little village street. By this time, George came to his aid. He had been away, and Dorla had been ill. But now he was at home, and now Dorla was creeping about the house, pale and dull, but still able to be out of bed. There were tickets arrived for theatricals at one of the hotels. George said that they must go. It was made a matter of obedience, and Dorla went.

The evening was warm and damp, the room in which the entertainment was held, was low and close. A great many people were packed into it. In fifteen minutes after the play began, Dorla was faint and frightened at herself. It is very unpleasant to feel you are going to die, at any time, but most of all, when you are the central atom of a closely wedged multitude of people. And the weaker you grow the more impossible seems the feat of getting past them, or moving them out of their inertia. Dorla wasn't thinking of Felix, or of what the people would think about her if she

fainted, or died outright in their midst. She was ignominiously and grovellingly thinking of herself, and of her horrible sensations; of the way in which her heart seemed stopping, of the suffocating feeling of her chest; the cold sweat that was breaking out around her mouth and forehead. She began to feel a good deal worse, when she found that George had moved away, and was beyond the reach of her voice, and that she was surrounded by strangers. It was beyond bearing to die this way, and she surely thought she was going to die. (She was young, and had never fainted before.)

About this time some one forced open a window near her, and the fresh air saved her for the time. The lady next her offered her *sal-volatile*, seeing her look pale, and that did her good for a little while. Beyond that, nobody took much notice of her. They had come late and were in rather an obscure part of the room, (if any part of it could be called other than obscure.) At any rate they had taken seats somewhat in the rear of the people who lived at the hotels and were on the ground before them. The play was about as vivacious as such plays generally are. Most people, looking at it in cold blood, would have thought it rather an ill measure, to pay two dollars, and sit for an hour and a half in this stifling atmosphere, for the privilege of seeing Miss Grayson with her back hair down, and being definitely assured that Miss Whymple's ankles were very neatly turned. Of course Mr. Davis was in tights and Mr. Oliver in a powdered wig; but that even the most enthusiastic did not count. The back hair and the ankles were all that could be reckoned seriously; the acting was very poor indeed.

Dorla did not know at all what it was all about. She did not listen, except to hope that it was nearly over. When it was about midway, and because of the opening of the window, and the salts, she was feeling rather better, there came a messenger to her, edging his way through the crowd, to say that George had been called away for an hour or two by some one on business from Port Jervis; that he would be



back as soon as possible, and that she must wait for him if he should be late. That was the last straw. She had been counting the minutes till he should come back and get her out of this frightful place. It might be hours; she knew what his "soon as possible" had sometimes been. She might be dead before he came. She began to feel worse, so much worse. This was the effect of her alarm in great degree, but also the good air that had come in through the briefly opened window, had all been used up, and the room was growing very close indeed. Would nobody come to help her out of the crowd? She half rose, and gave a wild look around. The seats were jammed as close as they could be together. People were standing with their backs against the wall. People were putting their heads in at the windows; all gaping at the mild pageant presented on the stage. She saw no one that she knew; but Felix, standing moodily with his arms crossed, just behind her, his eyes fixed on her, mounting guard, saw her and her look of illness, and made his way quickly to her. When she saw him, she felt a great deal nearer dying than she had done before, and sank down in her chair so white and trembling, that the lady next her thrust the salts again upon her, and tried to ask her what was to be done. But Felix made a way fiercely for her through the crowd, scattered the people without ceremony from their chairs, and led her from the room. There was a side door which he forced them to open, and so she was spared making her exit with much publicity. Only two or three persons who knew her, saw her go out, white and ill, on Felix's arm. They elevated their eyebrows, and thought she was doing it on purpose. Probable they had not tried to do it ever, themselves, or they would not have thought it was so easy. Whatever else people can do on purpose, they can't grow white and yellow, and grey-green on purpose, at least, not while you are looking at them. When they got outside, in the cool air and the dim starlight, Felix said, "Do you feel better?"

"No, no," she said, struggling to speak. "Get me somewhere—I want to lie down—I am very ill—"

Then Felix drew her arm through his and took a firm grasp of her hand, for he felt afraid she was going to fall upon the grass, over which they were making their way.

"If you can get as far as that piazza, you will be all right," he said. "See, take hold of my arm; go slowly, you will soon be better. Don't be frightened, it's only a step more."

When they got upon the piazza, (that of an adjoining cottage), Felix led her to a chair. She sank down in it, leaning her head back.

"Can't you get somebody," she said. "I want water."

Felix hurried into the house, but everyone was gone to gape at the mild pageant. A pitcher of ice-water and some glasses were in the hall however. He brought some water to her in a glass, and when she had taken it, she was revived a little.

"It was the air of that place," he said. "I never felt anything like it in my life before. I wonder all the people are not carried out insensible."

"Yes," said Dorla, drawing a long breath, and leaning exhausted back in the large chair. "Yes, it was a dreadful atmosphere."

She began to feel a great deal better, but even then she was too much occupied with her recent sensations and the possibility of their return, to think a great deal about Felix. The light from the window by which they were sitting fell upon her face, and he watched her silently. This was the first and only time, since they had danced together that last night, that she had not shunned him and seemed frightened. The change was a mystery to him, but he took it as a favorable sign. Though she did not seem to be thinking of him, at least she was not fearing him. He made a feint of calling for some one up and down the halls; then coming and sitting down, said nonchalantly :

"Some one will soon be here ; you will feel better if you sit quietly and rest for a few minutes."

"Yes," she said, placidly. She was thinking what heaven it was not to have that hideous, hideous sensation about her chest and heart.

"It is surprising," said Felix in his common-placest tone, "what people will endure, if they think they are amused. That room has been packed full of human beings for the last hour and a quarter, and they will endure the torture for half an hour more at least. And all for what?"

"For what indeed !" sighed Dorla, drawing another long, long breath.

"Could you imagine anything more insipid than the acting of Miss Whymple. And Miss Grayson was only a shade better."

"I didn't hear what it was all about," she said. "I don't believe I even know the name of the play. I felt so ill from the very first."

"You are better now?" asked Felix, looking at her keenly.

"Yes," she returned, uneasily. She was too much better to be placid any longer. "Yes, I am better, and I think I—I—will go back now," and she half rose.

"May I ask where?" said Felix in a cold voice. He had been sitting between her and the window, and he did not rise. She sat down again confusedly, and did not answer.

"Are you so anxious to see the end of the play?" he said cynically. "I have seen it better played a dozen times in my life, and I will recount you the plot, and we shall have better air, if you will be contented to sit here."

"I don't care for the play," she said faintly (and not very wisely ; but who can be wise always.) "But I think I had better go."

This time she got up upon her feet, and pulled her cloak around her, hardly knowing what she did.

"Mrs. Rothermel," said Felix in a low concentrated voice,

"will you sit down a moment? I want to say one word, and then I will take you anywhere you wish."

She sat down in her chair trembling all over. Felix in his angry passion did not see this; he went on speaking in thick agitated tones. "I want to say this to you, if you will listen to it; I understand you perfectly; it is not necessary for you to show me any further how you feel, that is all accepted. I only ask that you will cease to treat me in this sort of way. What have I done? My offence has been involuntary. I am not happy—that is not my fault. Need I promise you I will never say a word you would not wish to hear? Only let this strange state of things be at an end. I am human—I am a man—I cannot bear this any longer—you ask too much of me—"

But this foolish incoherent speech came to an abrupt conclusion. Dorla had not looked at him. She only looked away, but over her face passed such a frightful change that Felix catching sight of it, started forward and stayed his angry, unwise words.

"You are ill," he said, in a changed, awe-struck voice. "What have I done? I am a brute."

For that deadly, grey-green look came over her features, and they looked sharp and thin, and her head was sinking back upon the chair.

"Get somebody," she tried to say, "I believe I am very ill," and then she said and thought no more, poor child, for that hard time at least.

"Somebody" came by that moment; and it was not the work of many seconds to get a doctor and half a dozen women round her. But in those seconds, while he stood alone beside her, Felix learned the text of a great and searching lesson. Not all that she could have said or done, could have served poor Dorla so well, as that fainting fit. Such object teaching reaches where words cannot. It is easy to say, "this is killing me;" but when you see that play of death, you believe it. It was nothing but a fainting fit after

all; though the doctor said it was a pretty serious matter, and she would need much care. He stayed by her an hour or two after she came out of it, and would not hear of her being taken home that night. When George returned from his business matter, he found Dorla established in a room in the cottage, with Mrs. Bishop sitting by her, Mrs. Varian anxiously pacing up and down on the piazza, and the doctor walking away accompanied by Felix. What did it all mean? They explained to him how hot the room was where the theatricals had been, reminded him how delicate and prone to faint Dorla had been for the last few days; and how serious a matter the doctor had assured them it might be if she were not kept from all excitement and fatigue. Still he did not understand it, and went into the room unprepared to find her looking as she did, and of course startled her by his alarm. She was not thinking about him, or anybody or anything save her own suffering, but it almost sent her back into unconsciousness to see how shocked he was. Mrs. Bishop made him go away, and stayed with her all night.

By the afternoon of the next day, she was well enough to go home. Harriet came to the carriage and Mrs. Bishop was putting her carefully in it, while George stood by, looking much troubled and a little injured. It was a dull afternoon, grey and chill; it would have been much less dreary if it had rained; the weight of dampness in the atmosphere oppressed one like a coming trouble. Harriet pulled her cloak around her shoulders.

"It's like November," she said, "I hope you're well wrapped up, Dorla."

"Very well," said Dorla, faintly, anxious to get away.

"Mamma sent her love to you. She thought it would only trouble you, if she came over to see you. She thinks you ought to be so quiet. But she will be down to see you in a day or two. Felix is gone away," she said, turning to George, "and we feel quite desolate."

"Your brother gone?" said George. "Why, when was that? I thought I saw him here last night."

"O, yes, he only went this morning."

"Wasn't it rather sudden?" George inquired.

"Well, I don't know exactly. Possibly it was."

"He is coming back again?"

"Yes, I think very possibly, sometime before we go away."

"And where has he gone?" asked George with interest. Felix was the object of his high esteem.

"Canada and the Lakes, I believe," said Harriet, with sisterly indifference.

"Good people, it strikes me while you are chatting, poor Dorla is getting cold," cried Mrs. Bishop, anxious to make an end of the matter, watching her patient's whitening cheeks.

"Come, George," said Dorla, faintly, "I want to get home as quickly as I can."

"By the way," cried Harriet, just as they were starting. "To-day is the anniversary of our Brewery expedition. Just a year ago to-night, since that memorable occasion. Do you remember, Dorla?"

"Yes, I remember," answered Dorla.

"Ha, ha, how many things have come to pass since then!" cried Harriet, while Mrs. Bishop, with half-concealed impatience, called out, "Mr. Rothermel, if you don't drive on, Dorla must get out."

Animated by this recollection, that dreary afternoon, as Dorla was lying on the sofa by the window of her room, George brought to her a letter which he had taken from his desk.

"Here's the first letter you ever wrote me, Dorla," he said, with a little touch of sentiment. "See, I had put it away among my treasures."

"I don't believe it was worth it," she answered, with a sickly feeling of contempt for him and for herself.

"Yes, just a year ago to-day, as Harriet said," he went on, opening the letter.

"A year ago to-day!" exclaimed Dorla, flushing and putting out her hand for it. "I never wrote to you till—till we were engaged."

"O, you forget," said George. "The note you sent me—about going to the Brewery. I never shall forget it. It was the happiest day of all my life."

Dorla took the note in her hand, recognizing the pearl colored paper, and her own monogram; and alas, her own name too, and Harriet's large and commonplace handwriting.

Her eye passed over it again and again, and a hard and bitter feeling came into her heart. This was the way in which "young Rothermel" had been secured for the Brewery festivity; and the way in which her life's misery had been begun.

At last she handed it back to George, and said coldly, "don't trouble yourself to keep it any longer, for I didn't write it."

"You didn't write it," he exclaimed surprised, looking at it carefully. "Why, that is very true, I haven't looked at it since I have known your writing. Who did write it, pray? It's in your name, you see."

"Yes, I see it is," she answered with a languid scorn. "But that is Harriet Varian's hand."

"Is that the way young women do, writing each other's notes, and putting people on wrong scents?"

"It seems it is the way some young women do," said Dorla, turning her face down on the pillow, and pressing her lips close together.



ANADA and the Lakes. That was all very well; but Canada and the Lakes do not last very long if you are travelling as if you were a fugitive from justice. Felix had made up his mind what route to take in

the first fervor of his generous resolution. Nothing could have turned him from it; he went to the furthest "point of interest" that he had laid down for himself. But he had not bargained with himself how he should do it. And the further he found himself from the night of that generous resolution, the more did he neglect its spirit, while adhering to its letter. He travelled day and night; he turned not to the right hand nor the left, save as the right hand or the left was laid down in his programme. Like a man blind and deaf to nature, he sped through its richest expanses, moody, self-contained, unresting.

And at the end of ten days he found himself back in New York, in the great vacant house, with heat outside and silence within. Then began a miserable conflict with himself, which he endured for just five days—a long battle for a man who had always done as he wanted to before. Why should he not go to Milford? At least for a day or two. He need not go near the Rothermels; he *should* not go near the Rothermels. He would just run up and see his mother for a day or two; settle about their movements for the rest of the season, bring away his horse, and go somewhere else till the hot weather suffered him to come back to town.

And so at the end of the five days' battle, he found himself again in Milford. He felt as if he had been away for a year or two. It was late in the afternoon when he arrived, after six o'clock; no one was in the shabby, shady cottage. He went to his room, and dressed himself, deliberately and leisurely. It was the first time that he had done anything deliberately and leisurely since he went away. Now he began to feel as if there was a cessation of that desperate driving haste. The evening was very warm. When he was dressed, he walked about the premises till he found his mother's maid. Mrs. Varian was driving, she said. Miss Harriet, with a party of ladies and gentlemen, had walked down to the Bluff. All were well. They were not expecting Mr. Varian. Then Felix walked over to the hotel and



got his tea, still leisurely, as a man who has reached the "point of interest" in his journey and has no further need for haste.

After tea he sauntered towards the Bluff. The rest of Milford had sauntered thither too. The evening was lovely, the sky full of beautiful sunset tints. He felt cool and fresh himself; expectant, but not excited. He should not see Dorla, that was impossible; but in some way he should hear of her before he slept. Before he reached the Bluff, he saw his mother's carriage standing by the side of the road. Mrs. Varian, who never trusted herself for many minutes on damp grass or in night air, was doubtless won by the warmth and beauty of the evening, to one of the seats that overlook the river, and he should meet her there. There were one or two light shawls in the carriage, but no person. Felix walked slowly across the wide, grassy space that tops the Bluff. How charming a scene he was approaching. Gay groups of people stood and sat about. The river far below, and winding away in the distance, was pink and pearl with the reflection from the sky. The fields and woods on the other shore were still yellow with the sunset; the point of headland where the river turned, was deep in evening shadow. It was a wide, calm, lovely picture. The air came cool and soft from off the river; there was a sound of pleasant voices and of laughing. Some children were playing about the edge of the bank; the three or four benches were all occupied, but some people were sitting on shawls upon the grass, and some were standing up. Felix approached, unnoticed by the various groups; for the moment every one was looking at a raft upon the river, guided by a woman. Pausing a little back from the nearest bench, Felix glanced about him. Not three feet from where he stood, sat Dorla; lovely, calm, and smiling, watching with the others the movements of the raft. Beside her sat his mother; around her stood two or three gentlemen.

His first feeling, no, his second (for his first was only the

sudden intoxication of surprise), was angry chagrin that he had stayed away so long, and that she was so soon restored, and so surely cured by his most generous absence. She had never looked lovelier—paler, but without that harassed, worn look that had pursued him so. "I might have saved myself the trouble," he thought, biting his mustache. At that moment some one spied him.

"Mr. Varian!"

"Felix!"

And he was the centre of all eyes. While he spoke to every one, and kissed his mother, and answered Harriet's hundred questions, he lost not one of the changes that took place on Dorla's face. She grew steadily, surely paler for a moment; then the color came in spots and flecks about her face and throat. She tried to answer the gentleman who was standing by her, but her voice was not very steady, nor her words very ready. The gentleman was a stranger, and rather a distinguished looking man. Felix had no mercy on her, and stood near her, overhearing and agitating her by standing there. He was bitterly pleased to see her agitation, and as bitterly jealous of the good-looking, unoffending man. There was a good deal of chattering and talking on all sides of him, but by some magnified sense, he managed to keep up with it, and do his part in it, and yet not lose a word of hers. Pretty soon a soft breeze from the river, a little less warm than its predecessors, roused Mrs. Varian to her duty.

"It is surely damp," she said, getting up heavily with the help of Felix's arm. "Dorla, come, my child. This is the first time you have been out for a fortnight. A pretty piece of business, sitting here after sundown, as ill as you have been. Mrs. Rothermel will never let you drive with me again, if I don't watch you better."

Dorla rose with a sense of much relief, and followed Mrs. Varian and Felix at a few paces distance. The distinguished looking man was only too happy to walk beside her

to the carriage. Many eyes followed them as they left the bank, and many whispered comments, scarcely restrained by the presence of Harriet Varian, who was a little silent for once in her diffuse career.

"What a mercy Florence Estabrook has gone away," she thought. That that young person was got rid of, gave her cause to hope things might improve if one gave them time enough. But what could have impelled Felix to come back so soon.

Meanwhile, Felix had put his mother in the carriage, and was waiting for Dorla and her companion to come up.

"It's such a nice evening," he said to Mrs. Varian, as they waited, "you'd better drive a little further. It's all stuff about the dampness, if you'll allow me to be frank."

"It's not stuff at all," said his mother, very seriously. "That girl's extremely delicate, and needs the greatest care."

Felix shrugged his shoulders, glancing towards Dorla, who had stopped to speak to some one. "A little further drive won't hurt her."

"Well, possibly we may go—but mind, Felix, don't go with us. You know as well as I, that this sort of thing won't do. But here they come. Well, Dorla! (mind, Felix, what I say,) you shouldn't stop to speak to *any* one on the damp grass. Who were those girls, my dear? O, the Whymples? Think of my not knowing them. They must have new dresses, I am sure. Get in, my child, get in; the grass is damp, whatever they may say."

So Dorla got in, and her cavalier bowed himself off, and Mrs. Varian saying carelessly, "I suppose, Felix, there's no use in asking you," gave the sign to the coachman to go on.

"No use, unless you wait for me," said Felix, calmly. "Stop a moment, James; there," shutting the carriage door with a defiant snap, as he took his seat vis-à-vis to Mrs. Varian, "now you may go on."

Mrs. Varian frowned darkly, but her son did not permit himself to be affected by it.

"The river road?" James would like to know, with two white cotton fingers in contact with his hat.

"I don't know; no, I think not. Dorla, my dear, you can drive a little further, can't you?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Varian," Dorla said, gathering voice. "I am a little tired, I think. If you don't mind leaving me at home."

So James has his directions, and the horses' heads are turned.

"It is well to be prudent," says Mrs. Varian, secretly pleased that Felix has not had his way for once. "And there is a sort of chill creeping through the air."

"The air is like velvet, and not a particle of dew will fall to-night; but if Mrs. Rothermel is tired, that is another question."

"I think, Felix, you grow worse-mannered every day," exclaimed his mother, pacified. She never seemed so well satisfied with him as when he was a little brutal; or, as they say in novels, "masterful."

Felix bowed, and with the bow dismissed the subject finally, "I am sorry you have not been well," he said to Dorla. "I thought when I first saw you that you were looking much improved."

"Oh, I am better," she said, uneasily, "I do very well if only I keep quiet. Didn't you like your journey—I mean—did you stay as long as you meant to stay—that is—I mean—I understood you were going to stay a month or two—"

Poor Dorla did not know what she meant to say, and had said what she did not mean to, evidently, but that was not her fault, and no one could blame her; for Felix, jealous and angry, was wickedly self-possessed and bent on making up for his mistaken generosity.

"Like my journey? Oh, yes, in a way. Your saints like their hair-cloth, don't they? I am sorry it has seemed so

short a time to every one but me. For my part, I don't mind saying, it seems to me a long while since I went away from Milford."

"Nobody said it had seemed short," cried his mother, with impatience. "Only when a man bids his family good-bye for a month, and comes back in a fortnight, it's natural they should be surprised to see him."

"Well; only let them be civil to him when he comes. He is not to be blamed if he has overrated his strength. It is not possible to be always what we'd like to be," returned Felix, with a malicious determination to say before his mother what he would not have dared perhaps to say without her.

"Felix, you are making a fool of yourself," she said, hotly and bluntly. And then there was a silence. That was perhaps the wisest thing that had been said that evening; nothing else could have ended matters better. Felix *could* say nothing more; Dorla was as wretched and uncomfortable before as it was possible to be; and this added very little to what was already a full cup. The carriage rolled on for a quarter of a mile, and not a word was spoken. Then Mrs. Varian forced herself to speak. What she said was something about the scenery,—some commonplace about the river at this hour. Felix said nothing; and Dorla, in a humble, agitated voice that ought to have touched him, tried to answer her and carry on the commonplace. The voice and effort touched the mother, if they did not move the son; and after a moment she said warmly, and rather abruptly:

"I shall come for you to drive with me soon again, my dear, if you will go with me. I always like to have you; you're not like Harriet, forever fuming for a new excitement. You suit me better than most people, with your nice, quiet little ways.

"Thank you," said Dorla, looking down, with sudden tears welling up into her eyes. For into her mind came,

and into the minds of Felix and his mother came, as soon as this was spoken, the thought of what might have been; of what should have been. Strange that they could touch nothing but edged tools to-night. Another silence, during which all these three people thought, in his or her own way, of the companionship and pleasure which had been made impossible.

Not knowing that the others were thinking of the same thing, Mrs. Varian said, following out her train of thought.

"You will not stay here all the winter, will you, Dorla?"

"O, I don't know, I fancy so," answered Dorla, flushing. She had been thinking a thought to which this joined so fitly. And Felix said:

"I was just thinking it would be a savage place for you, with your city habits and your natural delicacy; you don't know what it will be; you were never here in winter."

"Yes, once," said Dorla, with a scorching blush. Then fearing lest they should ask when, she rushed on to say, "she did not mind it and there was nowhere that she cared to go."

"Mr. Rothermel ought to take you south for two or three months at least. I shall speak to him about it. I am sure he ought. He is—you'll excuse my asking such a question—he is quite well off, isn't he, my dear? Able to do it, I mean, if he thought it best?"

"I don't know," said Dorla, confused, "I should think so; but I am afraid I don't know much about it. I never have asked anything about it."

"Ah," said Mrs. Varian, with an honest sigh, "you were never very worldly-wise, my dear. Sometimes I get sick of worldly wisdom, but I don't know but what it's very necessary after all."

She was thinking that a girl of Dorla's looks ought to have commanded almost any price, and it is quite a wonder that she did not say so. Only having seen something of the inflammable nature of her audience, she was wise enough to

suppress this. It is difficult to say which was most trying during this trying drive to Dorla, silence, or this forced conversation that always came out so badly. Whatever they talked about brought them upon some rock. If any one could imagine that there was any dangerous pleasure to her in the presence of Felix, there never was a mistake more utter. She felt such fear, such agitation, there was no room for pleasure. She feared sin so much, it became impossible to her to be at ease, to be herself, when he was near her. He was associated with so much that was most painful, she had come to dread unconsciously the mention of his name. The thought of him, when he was far away, and when there was no danger of this shock and terror, was the worst temptation. He would have done himself much service, by giving more time to Canada and the Lakes. The exquisite evening, the thousand scents from field and wayside, the soft luxury of the open carriage, were all destroyed to her senses, by the agitation and alarm and discomfort of her feelings. She looked eagerly at every familiar spot they passed; how slowly James was driving; would they never reach the farm.

Bye and bye they reached it. Felix, counting every moment with very opposite emotions, saw her relief with chagrin and pain. This he could not understand; maybe, he told himself, it was his mother's presence that made her so unhappy. Perhaps she would give him one word, one look; so making his mother wait, he carried Dorla's shawl into the house for her.

"I hope you are *really* better," he said at the door, as he handed her the shawl, dropping the masterful-brutal tone and the cynical one. He was so hungry for her favor, he would have grovelled in the dust to get a word.

"Yes—and thank you—you need not to have brought it in. It is too bad to keep Mrs. Varian so long—thank you very much; good-night."

"But I did not say good-night," said Felix, still standing

in the door. "You know I have just come back. I want to know if you are really better. Please remember I have not the same advantages as those who are around you always."

All this time Dorla had not looked at him. Growing alternately red and white, she stood inside the hall, looking as if she longed to get away from him. It was well she had not looked at him; it would have been hard not to be moved by his expression.

"At all events," he said, drawing a deep breath as he turned to go away, "you will let me come to-morrow to see you for a little while? For I am going away again; and this time it will be long enough to please you."

"I—I shall be away to-morrow—that is, it is quite possible—"

"Then I shall not come to-morrow. But some other day. You know my going is not imperative. I *might* stay here all summer." There was a threat implied in this, and her face showed she understood it quite.

"But I shall hope to find you in when I come, and at liberty to see me. I may hope so, may I not?"

"Felix," called out his mother from the carriage.

"Good-night, then, Mrs. Rothermel," and he put out his hand. At this moment, the dear old mother-in-law of Dorla came into the hall. In turning to speak to her, Dorla avoided Felix, and when he again came to say good-night, she was standing several paces further from him, and Mrs. Rothermel in some way was between them.

"I hope your son is well," Felix said, constrainedly to her as he was leaving.

"I hope so; when we heard, he was."

"He is away?" asked Felix, looking up.

"Yes, hasn't Dorla told you? He will be gone a fortnight. He was called away on business. It is quite a journey."

Then Felix lifted his hat and said good-night, and went



down to the carriage, where sat his mother, very seriously disturbed.

"Felix," she began, as he took Dorla's place beside her.

"Mother!" he said, as he leaned back, turning his face away from her. "Don't you think I am of age, and can manage my matters for myself?"

"Yes, Felix, I know you haven't the excuse that you would have if you were not of age. But you are managing your matters very badly, and I think a mother might take the liberty of telling you the truth."

"I suppose I cannot help hearing it, as you have me *tête-à-tête*. But I'd much rather not, if it is quite the same to you."

"It isn't!" cried the mother, "it isn't; for I like that girl. And, Felix, I haven't much to love in the world; and you stand first."

There was a huskiness in his mother's voice that he had never heard before. It gave him a sense of emotion that was quite new to him; for he was of a more affectionate nature than any of his family, and he had always found it hard to live on the easy banter and occasional sharp skirmishing that sustained the family life. Caresses and emotions were impossible to Harriet, and difficult to Mrs. Varian. It rather alarmed her, and gave her a dread that she must be breaking down, to know that twice, within six weeks, she had felt like crying. She reviewed her symptoms, and made up her mind that she must see the doctor. Her nervous system must be giving way; these things are so insidious; maybe it was something serious.

As a young woman, she had always been brave and cheerful, not over sensitive, very healthy, very fond of the world. She had prided herself on not coddling her children. She had had her troubles, but they had not set heavy on her, and she had never been in the way of letting any one into her counsels. And if you do not talk about your feelings, they certainly are less important matters. Feelings were

not much accounted of in the Varian family. Harriet never had any to speak of, and Felix was bitterly ashamed of his, and what the mother had were so overlaid with selfishness, and a habit of reticence, and good health, and love of ease, that no one would have suspected her of their possession.

And so, when Felix heard that huskiness in his mother's voice, he was thrilled with a new feeling. He was a man that you could have done anything with, by his affections, but no one had been at the pains to do anything with him; and so he had grown to be what he was. Maybe this had been to the benefit of his manliness; his mother thought so, when she thought of it at all. She had feared he had rather a tendency to the emotional when he was a little boy; was rather soft, and showed an aptitude for crying when he was sent to boarding school, at the age of eight. This sort of thing it had been her object completely to suppress. She had quite succeeded; and at nine, when he went away, he had his cry in his own room, and hardly kissed his mother when she put him in the carriage. From that time to this, he had always kept his feelings to himself, and was a beautiful success in the opinion of his mother. She would rather he had been undutiful, ungodly, cruel, than to be unmanly, and to show a readiness of feeling that was against her taste, and made her uncomfortable in all its stages. Certainly no one cooler, more self-possessed and unemotional to the general eye, could be asked than her son had grown to be; and it was so gratifying to her that she even enjoyed being bullied by him, when she could provoke him to it.

It was a lowering of her flag, decidedly, when she told him in that untrusty voice, that she hadn't much to love in the world, and that he stood first. It was the novelty of it, Felix thought, that shook him so. There hadn't been anything like this, since that terrible eight-year-old going away to school, when, he should always think, she looked as if she wanted to cry too (but had made up for it by scolding and ridicule, that had made his life detestable).

"Felix," she continued, after a moment, "Felix, what is the use of going on in this foolish way. Heaven knows I've given you liberty enough ever since you were a boy, and never hampered you, and fretted you with questions, and with womanish restrictions. But this is right under my own eye, and I can't help seeing it, and you don't seem to make much secret of it either. What you can be meaning by it, passes me to understand. Here you are, spoiling the girl's life, and making us talked about by every one, and doing yourself no good in any way."

"I can't see how I'm spoiling her life. She seemed to be enjoying herself as much as anybody, when I came down to the Bluff this evening. If nobody is to speak to her, maybe you will give some advice to that big English fellow who was so close at her side all the time till you took her forcibly away."

"Come, come, Felix, that is rather small, to be jealous of a man who had not spoken to her twice before. She can't help it that she is prettier than anybody else; poor soul, it hasn't done her any good so far. She doesn't care much for all the big English fellows in the world. I wish she did, and then you wouldn't have so much on your conscience."

"I saw how it was going from the first," she went on. "Poor girl, she was blindly in love with you from the moment that you came. I was in hopes she'd take it lightly, get to be a flirt, and amuse herself with the admiration that she'll always have enough of. I don't see why she shouldn't, or what else she'll get out of life, with such a small fool of a husband! But she's not that sort at all; she takes it all in such deadly earnest. I never can understand these pious women. They seem to have the same feelings, good and bad, that other women have. But they don't seem to have the cleverness to get above them, and turn them to account. They must know everybody has tight places to go through. If such a thing had happened to me when I was her age, nobody would have been the wiser. I would have danced,

and flirted, and sung, and cured myself to my own satisfaction. I wouldn't have given up, because I had made one mistake. I would have got some pleasure out of my life, small fool of a husband notwithstanding. But she, she is ready to lie down and die; she hasn't pluck enough to face the facts. To be sure, no woman ever threw herself away more foolishly. I really don't blame her for being pretty desperate. It is a thousand pities."

"And whose work was it?" said Felix, with set teeth.

"Whose? I don't know. Some foolish scruple that she had about his illness."

"Harriet has boasted over Milford all the summer that she made the match."

"Well, yes—well, I suppose she had a good deal to do about it. But, dear me, it doesn't do to look into things too closely. We might all be responsible for more things than we'd like to be, going at that rate. For my part I think if people mean well, that's all that should be asked of them, and no further criticism. Harriet wouldn't hurt a fly—but, somehow—"

"Spare me any word of Harriet now."

"Don't be unjust to her at any rate."

"I feel as if I never wanted to look at her again," said Felix, low between his teeth.

"She's your sister, and that's a frightful way to talk. Don't, Felix, let this thing come between you, don't."

"Mother, we will not talk of Harriet."

"No, that isn't what we began about, and isn't what I want to say to you. I may not have another chance; and I want to put it to you, seriously, Felix. Are you doing right, and do you mean to go on this way any longer?"

"I don't know, mother, what I mean to do. And at this moment I don't care one atom whether what I do is right or wrong, or who is hurt or who is pleased, or who may take offence."

The tone was so abandonedly miserable and the manner

so different from his unmoved habit, that Mrs. Varian felt a sort of fear. "This wretched complication!" she said to herself again and sighed.

"But Felix," she said, presently, aloud. "This sort of talk doesn't do any good. You know you do care whether you do right or wrong, and what people think of her, if not of you. One would think you were a boy from what you say, a boy, and something of a coward too. Don't you know people can't live many years without coming up against some wall like this. Things you can't help, things you can't get over, sometimes of one kind, sometimes of another. What would it look like, if we all sat down and cried? A pretty crowd we'd be! No, Felix. Be a man about it! This thing can't be helped and you'll have to do as better people have done before you, go off and forget it. This time a year, I'll ask you if I am not right. You'll be ashamed even to remember that you talked to me about it. I know something of life, my son; I know what people can do if they make up their minds to do it."

Felix moved his hand with an impatient gesture. This was not what he wished to hear.

"O, I know. You think I am not half as wise as you are, and a woman into the bargain, and you don't care to listen to my views of life. If you think so, I know there is no use in argument. But at least you'll let me ask your mercy for another woman, who may be as ignorant as I am of your superior code, and who is much younger than I am, and I am afraid a good deal weaker. Have a little pity upon Dorla, Felix. Don't make things any worse for her than they are already. Don't turn the world against her. It wouldn't take many more scenes to do it. Don't torment her with the sight and thought of you; give her a chance to get over this if it is possible."

"And if it isn't possible," said Felix, fierce and low below his breath.

"It is possible; it is possible. How many women have

to get over the same thing. Why is Dorla any different from other women except that she hasn't any pluck. I am sure she can get used to disappointment like any other, and go on and lead her pious life if it comforts her, just as I should have gone on and led a jolly one if it had been my luck. It all comes to the same thing. She can get over it soon enough if you will only let her alone."

"And how if I won't let her alone?" asked Felix, with the same suppressed vehemence of intonation.

"How if you won't? Why, then, I shall say you are a worse man and a more foolish one than I had ever thought you. Felix! [By this time the mother was frightened and gave up her arguments.] Felix, you haven't had the chance to refuse me many favors, for I haven't asked you many. Do this thing for my sake; remember who it is that asks you; remember that I am your mother."

"Some very trifling thing to ask, no doubt," said Felix, with a bitter laugh.

"Trifling or no, I ask it, and I don't believe you will refuse me. You've been a good boy, Felix—I'm not one to say much—but if I haven't you—what have I? Don't let me be disappointed in you; don't! I am an old woman now. There mayn't be many more things that you can do for me."

"Mother, you are hard upon me—" cried Felix.

He was thinking, but he did not say, after all these years of cold repression, just to use her words of tenderness to force him to give up to her. She had moved him deeply though, and she began to see it.

"Do this one thing for me, Felix; go away, go away at dawn to-morrow. All will yet be right."

"No, mother, that is asking more than I will ever do. I will not go away to-morrow."

"Then, Felix, you do not mean to listen to me. I might as well have held my peace. My son, I have had many disappointments; you haven't heard much of them, for I keep

my troubles to myself; but I think this will be the hardest. I did not think you would refuse me."

"I have not refused you. I mean to go away. But you must not push me too hard, mother. I will make no promises. In three days, I mean to go away; let that be enough. I hope you can trust me for that time. I suppose I am no better and no worse than most men of my generation; you needn't expect too much of me. But you needn't think I am a fiend."

The words that Mrs. Varian said then were dear to Felix's heart forever. Poor Felix! He had had so few words from her. She began to see she might have done anything with him, and she had done so little. A sharp remorse was filling her world-filled soul. She saw luridly at moments what she had been missing on her easy, merry road. \* \* \*

That was the basis upon which matters were adjusted; that Felix should go away in three days' time, and that he was not to disappoint his mother. The next day he certainly seemed to be behaving better, and a load was lifted off her heart. He did not avoid the people who surrounded them; he even endured the presence of Harriet. He had not seen Dorla as far as Mrs. Varian was able to inform herself.

But it had not been for want of effort to do so. He had driven in every direction in which he had supposed it possible that she might drive; had passed the house more than once, but all without success. He in his own mind had fixed upon the following afternoon for his interview with her; that interview that she would not have the bravery to refuse to him. What it would result in—what he would have the courage to say, or the generosity to suppress, he could not even guess. He had a feverish interest in life, so long as that meeting was still to come. He did not look beyond it. It was to be all blank. But it was not blank yet. He could be patient, civil; could talk with people whom he met; he wondered at himself. But in

envelope. It was addressed to the Honesdale Manufacturing Company and had been lying opened on the floor of the office for the last three days, but it served equally the purpose of this wily person.

"I find I'm called down to the city," he said, folding up and putting in his pocket a sheet of telegraph office paper, (blank, but Oliver was not near enough to see.) "I'll have to get you to drive my horse back for me, if you will. And say to my mother, that I've gone down on business, and that I'll be back in a day or two, just as soon as ever I get through with it. I'll write her if I am not back to-morrow."

"All right," said Oliver. "I hope it's nothing of an unpleasant nature."

"O, no," returned Felix, "hardly of importance enough to be unpleasant, but just one of those things that must be attended to on the spot if it is attended to at all."

"You haven't much time to lose," said Oliver, looking at his watch. So after a few words the two men parted, the elderly mouse-colored Oliver, much deceived, back to Milford, not without some misgivings as to his personal safety behind that fleeting steed; and Felix, with a storm of passion under good control, into the waiting-room of the hotel. Dorla was sitting listlessly near an open window. She did not see him till he stood beside her. He feigned surprise. Was she going to the city too? Was she all alone? Then he should ask the pleasure of taking care of her while they were *en route*. And with that he took possession of the travelling-bag beside her. She was very pale and hardly answered when he spoke to her, but that did not surprise him. He took a seat beside her. There were two or three people, strangers, on the other side of the room. Felix took out his watch.

"We have just eleven minutes. I need not have hurried so, I have just been to the telegraph office. I find myself



called to town on business. But I shall not regret it, if I can be of any use to you."

Dorla drew a long breath. Then it was fate and not his cruel purpose.

"Is not your going somewhat sudden," he asked, looking at her intently as he spoke.

"Yes—no—I have thought of it for a day or two."

"Ah! such a disagreeable season to go to the city. I fancied you rarely or never went."

"I have never been before, since—since I have lived at Milford."

There was a silence of several moments.

"You could scarcely have chosen a worse day," he said, putting out his hand for a palm-leaf fan on the table near him. "I am afraid it will be very close."

"I did not choose it," said Dorla, speaking with an effort. "I thought I ought to go. I have had bad news; it seemed a duty."

"You have had bad news," repeated Felix, eagerly, his heart softening with a sudden melt (how ready it was to soften). "I hope it is not anything that really pains you. I am very sorry—"

"It is—Harry," and her voice broke down.

"Your brother?" asked Felix, gently. "He is ill?"

Dorla assented, but she could not speak. At that moment the whistle sounded, and the people in the waiting-room all hurried out.

"It is not our train," said Felix, as he took her shawls and bag. "But ours is due in another minute and we had better go across, and be on the spot."

She followed him humbly. What else was there for her to do, poor child. And he, in hot torment of remorse and self-reproach, led her across the maze of railway tracks, into the crowded depot. He had been blaming her, and she had had no will to baffle him, but had been suffering cruelly. She seemed born to suffer. His heart swelled with the

pain it gave him to know she was unhappy. Presently their train came thundering up; in another moment they were in it. He put her in a seat.

"I will see if we cannot do better," he remarked, laying down the shawls and bag beside her, and going away for a few moments. When he came back he said,

"I find there is a Pullman car on the train, and there we shall be more comfortable."

He had found to his great satisfaction one of the larger compartments vacant, and into that he led her. He took her bag and shawls, and put them out of her way, placed a footstool for her feet, arranged the window.

"There is a nice breeze coming in here now," he said, "we shall not find it half as warm as I had thought."

If he could only make her comfortable, protect her, and for a moment make her life less dreary. But she looked so wan and wretched, he had not much heart. He was so relieved and yet so conscience-stricken; it was such a strange bliss to be here with her alone, as much alone as if he had had his way about seeing her at home. And yet it was so harrowing to see her face so sad. He had not yet seated himself. He stood opposite her by the window. She was gazing vacantly out upon the beautiful hills and the forests below them; but he could see that she looked at nothing.

"Harriet has told me of—of your brother," he said at last, in a hesitating tone. "I am truly sorry to know you are so anxious. Maybe there is not cause, and it has been exaggerated."

She shook her head. "I wish it were that," she said. "But I believe I shall find I do not know the worst."

"It is so natural to feel so," he said. "But often it turns out we have imagined the worst when it was really not to come upon us."

"I might as well imagine it—it always comes upon me," she said, in a bitter tone. And then she quite broke down. "I don't see why I have such trouble—I wish that I could

die—" And bowing her head down upon the table before her, she sobbed without restraint.

And Felix? He stood with his arms folded, looking down at her. He dared not trust himself to speak. He held his lips tightly pressed together, almost white with the intensity of his control. No, he could not help her: he was her torture; he had made her life what it was; it was not for Harry that she cried alone. It was all before him, and his soul was desperate in the vision. No words of his could help her; he was more than useless to her; he, a strong and clever man, whose life lay at her feet. Her weakness, her misery, her beauty; how they made him love her. Impotent, damning, fatal love. There was one thing that he could do to help her; just one thing. How could he make the sacrifice? he who thought that he loved her well enough to die for her? Yes, he could leave her; go away and never cross her path again. He looked down at her—so fair, so helpless, so suffering. Wealth, strength, intellect, love—all his gifts he could not use for her. He could only go away. She had thrown one arm across the table, and her head was buried in the other. The ungloved hand that lay upon the table was so slender, white and unnerved. There was something plaintive in it. It lay within a few inches of Felix's own. And yet he dared not touch it. In the tempest of feeling in his mind, he said to himself, as he looked at it, that he would be willing to die to hold it in his grasp a moment, yes, a moment, a tangible, definite, time-recorded moment, made up of sixty seconds. And yet he dared not touch it. And life might pass over him, and all of time and death, and he should never touch it—should never stand any nearer to her than he was standing now.

Very much of what was in his soul was on his face; too much, alas!

There was a glass door to the compartment, which Felix had closed after him as he came in. There was ground and cut glass above and below, but the two central panes were

of clear glass. Felix, turning suddenly, saw through this glass, the face of young Davis looking in with an expression made up of curiosity, malice and amusement. In an instant it flamed through Felix's mind, the horrible position in which he had placed his innocent companion. All his mother's words, all Dorla's ineffectual struggles, all his own reasoning, had not done it; but that one sight of Davis' face revealed the black abyss to him. Their sudden disappearance at the same time, the grief of Dorla, the whole scene, in fact, on which Davis had intruded, would make a story that would fatally compromise her honor. His selfishness and his sin were fully revealed to him at a glance. He hated himself, and was in mortal terror for a moment. The sacrifice that he had played at making, he made now with all the fervor of remorse.

"If I can free her from this devil's net into which I have pushed her, I will never trouble her peace again, if it costs me all my own."

All the reasonings of his quick brain were none too great. It was, indeed, a desperate situation. But before Davis' face had disappeared from the window (and he moved away the instant he caught the eye of Felix), Felix's plan was made. He made a quick sign to Davis, and letting himself out of the door, closed it and joined him outside.

"I had forgotten you were going to town to-day," he said. "You said something to me about it yesterday, I remember. But I wasn't thinking of going then myself."

An incredulous laugh lit Davis' eye. "No, I believe you didn't mention it."

"I had an unexpected call to town, and had to send back my horse by Oliver, from the station. I hope he will not come to grief before he gets to Milford."

"Hope not, indeed." returned Davis, with unappeased malice in his tone, "Oliver isn't much of a whip, I've always understood."

Felix had been so staggered by the sudden danger of the

situation, that he had hardly gained control of his voice; but now he went bravely at the business.

"Where are you sitting?"

"Here's my chair, I believe," said Davis, moving towards the saloon or open portion of the car. "I was on my way to find my number, when—when I caught sight of you in the compartment."

"Here's another vacant chair. I'll take it till some one comes to claim it. To tell the truth, I think poor Mrs. Rothermel is better off by herself for a little while. You've heard about it, I suppose?"

"Heard about it—what—I don't know what you mean."

Felix fixed his eye intently, keenly on the youth whom he was resolved to master. "About her brother. Something grave has happened, but I didn't like to question her; I think she fears she may not find him living."

"Ah! Is that it? I—I really didn't know." And then there came a cynical look across his youthful features.

"Yes," said Felix, with a manner of indifference, twisting his chair to the right point for the breeze. "But a miserable fellow, I have understood, a disgrace and trouble from the very first. I shouldn't wonder if it were a suicide or some sort of serious complication. I'm sorry for his poor sister; it's a miserable business."

"Yes," said Davis, a little staggered for the moment. "Yes, it's a—nasty piece of work."

Felix hummed a tune, and sat looking out of the window stolidly for several minutes, as men do. He was desperately revolving in his mind what to say next; he dreaded so to overdo the matter. Davis, in the meanwhile, was getting a little over his surprise, and found himself, the more he thought about it, quite unconvinced that his first suspicions were without foundation. It must be remembered that Dorla and Felix had been town talk for several weeks, and that he had been once snubbed by Dorla, and many times by Felix. That did not make him sweet tempered. Last

summer he had rather fancied himself in love with her, and he had not been without aspirations even later. Besides which, he was not a fool, though by no means a match for Felix on an even ground. But things were so much against Felix in this encounter, it would be difficult to say how it was going.

A boy came by with papers; they each bought one, and each buried himself behind the one that he had bought; and each knew very little of the news of the day, when he emerged from that retirement.

"Not much to be got out of that sheet," said Felix, with a yawn, laying his down upon his knee.

"No, not much stirring in the way of news," replied the other, folding his with nonchalance. "When do you go back to Milford?" he continued, looking covertly at Felix.

"To-night," said Felix, promptly. "I shall get through all I've got to do in half an hour, at least. It is doubtful whether I'll have to go up town at all. I mean to get off by the 7:50 train."

"Ah, then we shall meet again. That is, if you are able to get off. I'm going back by that train too."

"Then, if you get down first, engage a seat for me, if you think of it. There's sometimes a great crowd at that hour."

"Yes, certainly, if you think you won't be kept; I mean, if you think it at all likely that you really will get off."

"I don't know anything to prevent my getting off unless I break my leg, or get jammed between the wharf and the ferry boat. Such things have overtaken better men; but I can't help a sort of confidence that I may slip through safely. Not because of my many virtues, but because I generally look where I am going."

"Certainly," said Davis, a little abashed, but generally vicious. "I hadn't thought about your coming to grief in that way. But I didn't know whether this affair of Mrs. Rothermel's might not keep you. There might be some-

thing that you'd have to do for her, if it's such a serious matter."

"I am afraid it is such a serious matter that I could not even make an offer of my services. I am a comparative stranger, and in a family trouble like this, it is a delicate matter to attempt intrusion. There is nothing that I'd do with greater pleasure though, and I hope she understands it."

"O, I'm sure she does," said Davis, carelessly, but with an intonation that made Felix dig his fingers into the cushion of his chair; they tingled so to get about the fellow's throat.

Davis was getting brave. He had always been secretly afraid of Felix, but to-day he vaguely felt that he could go great lengths. He knew that he could not have spoken thus with impunity at any time before during their acquaintance. Felix was rather at a loss; there was no need for any further statements; and general and desultory conversation is difficult with a man whose throat is a temptation. He covertly watched the time. There was an hour and three-quarters yet to be disposed of.

"Do you feel like smoking?" he said rising. Davis felt like it, rose and followed him. As they passed the door of the compartment where Dorla sat, "stay," said Felix, "where are our papers? I will take them in to Mrs. Rothermel, and see if there is anything that we can do for her."

He went back to look for the papers, leaving Davis standing at the door.

"Shall you go in?" said Felix as he came back, smoothing the papers out in his hands.

"Certainly not," returned Davis with abominable promptness. Dorla was sitting by the window leaning her head back, and gazing out with the same absorbed expression. Davis watched narrowly while Felix approached her. There was not much to see. Felix purposely stood between her and the door; but Davis might have seen her face, for

all its change of color. It was deep wretchedness, and nothing, nothing else.

They went away to smoke; and in the smoking car Felix met a person whom he knew, to his extreme relief. He abandoned Davis, and talked with the new-comer as if he had no other interest in life. Davis meanwhile watched him narrowly, and began to feel quite young and unimportant. When they were nearing the city, Felix threw away the remnant of his last cigar, and seeming just to have recalled Davis' existence, joined him and said,

"Are you going back to the car just now?"

Davis, quite restored to his ordinary good manners, assented, and they went into the car that they had quitted. By this time Davis had begun to doubt exceedingly the correctness of his first impressions. This doubt was rather deepened by the easy way in which Felix, stopping at the door, said to Dorla,

"We are nearly at our journey's end, Mrs. Rothermel. Can I not take your checks, or has the expressman been to you? I should have thought of that before."

"The expressman hasn't been. At least, I haven't seen him," said Dorla, very wearily.

"That's odd; Davis, has he been through the car?"

Thus addressed, Davis had to bow, and suffer himself to be drawn into the conversation.

"I will go and look him up," said Felix, and Davis, to his chagrin, found himself left beside Dorla, and obliged awkwardly to talk to her till the return of Felix. Beside the natural dread which a man has of talking to any one in trouble, particularly if it is a woman and liable to cry, he felt exceedingly ashamed of himself for all the naughty things he had been thinking of her. He would have been a brute, if he could have thought anything that was not good and pitiful of the poor girl before him; and he certainly had no thoughts that were not such. When Felix came back, just as they reached the depot, there was so much to be said



about trunks and expressmen and checks and numbers (new and old) of streets, that Davis could not see much room left for sentiment.

"I must see if I can't find the man, for you don't want to wait till the baggage is taken over," Felix said. "Davis, if you'll take Mrs. Rothermel on the boat, I'll see what can be done. Give me your checks, Mrs. Rothermel. Let me see. I have the address all right?"

He read it over to her. So Davis found himself giving his arm to Mrs. Rothermel, and carrying her shawls, and getting her safely through the jostling crowd. It was very warm; the depot was suffocating. Dorla looked very pale. On the ferryboat it was better. Davis got seats near the door, and the fresh breeze from the water was restoring. Felix came after a while and stood beside them, for there was no seat. He had found the expressman, and that was all right. They talked about express companies, and the bad management of ferryboats, and all the dozen things that people talk about when they are travelling and haven't much to say. When they reached the other side, there was a worse crowd than usual, people pouring on and people pouring off the boat at the same moment. Felix saw with agony that Dorla was growing very pale again.

"I will find a carriage for you, if you will stay with Mr. Davis. Davis, don't let them take you off your feet. Wait there for me. I will not be many minutes."

So Davis waited, and he couldn't help thinking it looked more as if Mrs. Rothermel was eloping with him than with Felix Varian. He began to wonder if he were being made a cat's-paw of. Felix soon found the carriage, and beckoned them to come. He held the carriage-door open for Dorla, and Davis raised his hat.

"Wait for me a moment," Felix said to him, as he showed a disposition to move off.

"I thought perhaps you'd be going to ride," Davis said,

looking at him sharply, as he delivered up the shawls and bag.

"No, I'll walk along with you, if you'll wait a moment."

Dorla was in the carriage, but she was looking ghastly white. The heat indeed was great; the men about the wharves were wiping the perspiration from their faces, and gasping for fresh air. The sun was obscured, but the air was motionless.

"You don't feel faint," said Felix, hurriedly.

"N-no—" said Dorla, trying to speak firmly. "I shall be better—but this heat is frightful."

"I wish I could do something for you," he said. "Good-bye!"

He shut the carriage-door and told the man where to drive. He did not look at her again, he dared not. For this was in truth Good-bye. He never meant to see her again. It was almost more than he could bear to see her go away uncared for and alone, through the great cruel city. He had a feeling that at all moments of her life she should be guarded and watched over, that she was too precious and too dear to walk the common ways of life. But to-day, in all this storm of trouble, and with that white and suffering face, to let her go alone was an act that seemed to rend his heart. He knew that she had no one on whom to depend; he thought of all the dark maze of trouble in which she would be involved when she once reached her brother; no one to do anything for her, no one to decide for her what should be done in all the matters that arose. He did not know where this brother might be, into what dangerous and vile places she might not have to follow him; as he had thought it over, on the ferryboat, while he was talking of express companies and crowds so commonplacely, he had almost resolved, he could not leave her, come what might. But another doubtful look on Davis' face had settled it; she must go alone, if she died as the result of going so. And indeed her face would have

given a more unconcerned person a feeling of alarm. She certainly was not in a fit state to drive three miles alone through this terrible heat, with a strange driver on the box, who would probably give neither eye nor ear to her till they reached their destination. She might well die and he be none the wiser.

"Well, I don't know but that's the best thing she can do," thought Felix bitterly, as he watched the carriage whirl around a corner, while he walked by Davis' side, "and then I'll try the temperature of the river, and there will be an end."

Yes, he had said good-bye to her forever, and his heart was as sore as if he had known that she was dead; it seemed to him as he walked along the miserable, crowded, stifling street, that no greater sacrifice had ever been asked of any living man. Very black and hateful his life looked to him at that moment; it only might have been darker by one shade; he still had something that he must do for her. And something so imperative, that unless he did it faithfully, she might much better have been dead. He knew that unless he were seen in Milford that night, she was a ruined woman: that unless he made clear to the senses of this tattling boy, that no moment of the three hours that he spent in town was spent with her, her honor and her position in the world were compromised beyond redemption. When he thought how innocent and how sinned against she was, he felt as if no pain would ever be too great to be put upon him. His infatuation and cruel selfishness overwhelmed him with remorse. He felt the cold sweat start on his forehead when he thought of the danger he had placed her in.

"You look quite done over," said Davis, looking at him askance, as they toiled through the reeking streets that border the city front.

"Upon my word, I believe there never was a worse day since the world was made," said Felix, wiping his forehead and taking off his hat. He had been off his guard a mo-

ment, and had forgotten that the fellow was beside him. He now knew that it would not do to trifle; his companion was awake if he was not. "Let's get through our business in the shortest metre," he said, in a tone meant to be jovial, "and you'll dine with me at Delmonico's, where we'll take our ease till it's time to catch the train."

Davis was something of a gourmand, and was kept rather short of money by his father besides, so that the prospect of a dinner at Delmonico's with such a lavish prince as Felix spread a rosy color over everything. It was arranged that they should meet at the restaurant in half an hour; the business that he had in Wall street wouldn't consume a moment more. At the corner of Broadway he was saying good-bye to Felix.

"My business is in Wall street, too," said Felix, "let's get into this stage."

At the door of an office in Wall street, Davis stopped. "It's about some plaguy stocks of father's," he said, "about which I'm sent to town twenty times every summer. But I won't be many minutes."

"I'm going in there," said Felix, pointing opposite; "when you've finished your business, come in for me; then there'll be no waiting."

He determined that in the far future, in any contingency that might arrive, there should be no ten minutes in that bitter day that should be unaccounted for.

"The keen demands of appetite" carried Davis quickly through the matter of the stocks; in fifteen minutes he was in the lawyer's office where Felix was writing a letter at a desk.

"My man is out of town," he said, motioning Davis to a seat, "and I've had my journey pretty much for nothing. But I'll soon be through my letter, if you'll wait a minute."

The letter was to Dorla. It seemed to him that it would ease his pain unspeakably, if he could make her understand why he left her when she seemed so ill; if he could put her

at rest about his future persecutions, if he could make her see how penitent he was, and how thoroughly he saw the wrong that he had done her. The pen slid rapidly over the paper, and then came to a sudden, final halt. This was treason to his resolution. He had said good-bye, he had sworn never to disturb her more. What good could this do? was not even this compromising her afresh? Felix had a nice sense of honor when it was not under the cloud of a passion to which he was given up. He tore the sheet in two, and crushed it in his hands.

"Confound it," he said, mindful of his audience, "I don't believe I can make the fellow understand. What's the good of a lawyer that's always running out of town."

Then he took a fresh sheet, and wrote a business letter with deliberation; one can always find something to write about to one's lawyer. When this was accomplished, he called a clerk and delivered it to him with many charges.

Then he summoned Davis, who obeyed with much alacrity, and they went together to Delmonico's. Felix was always looked upon as such a swell, and so given up to the lavish and the grand, that Davis suspected no ulterior design in the prodigality of the repast. He ate and drank, and his heart grew soft towards Felix; he repented him of all his evil thoughts, he looked upon him as a prince, he felt himself a more important man for the experiences of this day. For Felix, by reason of his good looks, his money, social advantages, and much life abroad, ranked higher than any man whom Davis could count as his acquaintance. He almost felt that they were intimate, over their iced champagne. He wished a great many could see them as they went out arm-in-arm, which they did at last, smoking cigars which would have put Davis in arrears for a month, if he had had to pay for them. He vaguely felt that anything was excusable in a man who could habitually command such luxuries as these.

When they had made their way through the dense, hot

crowd again, and found themselves upon the ferryboat, Felix shook himself clear of his companion for a moment, and went out upon the stern, and gazed back over the waters upon the city they had left. The evening breeze was cool and soft; the day's turmoil was at an end; they were past all the evil sights and sounds and smells; the faint mist of twilight was settling over the great, cruel hive of suffering and sin. But somewhere there in the vast, palpitating crowd, was hid that fair face that he must never look upon again, that sweetness and that joy that were lost to him forever. He leaned over the rail, and looked into the dark cold water, and back to the lessening city, with its dim veil of smoke and its few faint, early lights; and then there came a noisy jar, and a dying-away of the cool breeze, and a movement among the crowd, and their little voyage was ended. They stepped out upon the wharf, from one city to another, from one crowd to its sister, from turmoil to turmoil, with one still breath of thought between.

The day had been such a strain to Felix that he felt jaded and weary, and as if he had spent half a life since it began. Davis was tired too, and passed the hours of the journey fast asleep beside him. Felix was tired enough to sleep, but sleep would not come. Heavy-eyed and unspeakably weary, he waked Davis when they reached the station, and they got into the carriage for which he had telegraphed back to Milford from the city.

"Well, we haven't had such a bad day after all," said sleepy Davis, when the silent drive was nearly over, remembering the iced champagne.

"It has been very hot," said Felix simply, in return.

Arrived at the hotel, Felix was almost moved to feeling by finding his mother waiting for him. She looked rather anxious, but was not the woman to ask questions. "I've just got through a game of whist," she said apologetically, (it was almost two hours ago,) "and I thought I'd stay about the piazza for a little while to see if you were come."

Felix thanked her in an unmeaning way. He was almost too tired to speak. "I want something to eat," he said, "if that can be got."

"Come over to the cottage," she said, pleased, "and Rose shall give you some sardines, and some peaches, and a biscuit, and a glass of wine."

Felix made a gesture of disgust. "I could not eat such things," he said. "I'll see if they can't give me some cold beef and ale."

For he had one fixed idea that all his weariness could not obliterate, and that was, that as many people as could, should see that he had come back to-night to Milford. Davis yawned disgusted.

"How can you, Varian, after those last pâtés?"

"The pâtés are things of the past," said Felix doggedly, though his soul loathed the thought of the cold beef.

"Well, then, I suppose I may go," said his mother, seeing nothing else to do. It made her so uncomfortable to see Felix's haggard face, that she was rather glad to get out of the sight of it, if she couldn't do him any good.

It was a hard matter to get anything to eat at such an hour, but after a little effort, some remnants of the dinner's beef were put upon the table, some bread and butter, and a bottle of Bass' ale. Davis reconsidered the matter, and concluded to assist him; one or two stray euchre players came in and joined them; a small party of belated excursionists saw them through the window, and Felix felt repaid for the effort he made to swallow the insipid beef.

"I don't believe there were ever so many people up at this hour before in Milford," said Davis, looking round surprised.

"What a comfort to think that we are welcomed back!" said Felix, lighting his cigar.

Felix stayed one week longer in Milford. There was nothing further said about the three days by his mother. She had heard about Dorla's absence, and she understood it

all. There is one advantage in these undemonstrative people: they do not torture you with questions when you cannot stand it. Felix could not have endured a question, but he was very willing his mother should know all there was to know, in fact was a little comforted by her sympathy and approbation, so long as they were silent.

When he told her he had written to take passage for Liverpool by the steamer of the 31st she had the good sense to make no observation that she would not have made a year ago, if he had told her the same thing.

He made himself very pleasant to every one with whom he came in contact. He was particularly careful to be civil to Davis and to Oliver. The young women sighed about him, and wished the summer were just at its beginning. It must have been all a misapprehension about that Rothermel affair, at least as far as *his* part in it went.

After two or three days there was an announcement in the papers, of the death of Henry St. John. And after three or four more, Dorla in deep mourning, and looking very wan, was seen by some one to arrive. Mrs. Varian before this had called at the farm-house, and heard that George was with his wife in the city, and had learned on what day she was expected home. At noon of that day she arrived; and at five o'clock, Felix had said his last words to his family and his friends, and was gone from Milford. Four days afterward, he had left America.



### III.

**I**T was a year and a half later, and Felix was again at home. A letter from his mother, misdirected, had followed him from place to place, and at last came into his hands, six or eight months old, at Rome, where he was established for the winter. Other letters from her had come straight enough since this was written, but as was natural to her, she had never alluded to its contents in any of them. Four hours after he received it, he was on his way to Havre. And this is what the letter said :

“MY DEAR FELIX—You know I don’t like to write letters ; so, as I have thought it best that you should know all about poor Dorla, I have told Harriet to write you the particulars. As she enjoys writing always, this is no hardship to her. I will only add this assurance to you, that I have done all I could for her comfort and safety, and that she is at present in the city. I think her health improving, though she is much shattered by all she has passed through.

“Your letters come very regularly, but I think they might be longer ; now, don’t you think they might yourself ? But I suppose I am not the one to talk about short letters.

“Affectionately your mother,

“ISABELLA VARIAN.”

It may be judged with what haste Felix tore open the enclosure, and with what impatience he ran through the preliminary pages of the prolix Harriet’s letter. At last he came to this :

“I suppose mamma has told you (or no, I believe she

said she hadn't told you, and that I must do it when I wrote) about the Rothermels, and all that that poor girl has gone through. She stayed at Milford all the winter; nothing could persuade her to come away even for a little visit, although mamma wrote and asked them. (I think it was very kind of her, for George, poor fellow, would have been very tiresome in the house.) But Dorla would not come. And towards spring, George was taken down with that same dreadful fever that he had the year before. (So after all it wasn't on account of Dorla's treatment of him, that he was so ill, then. I should think it would have aggravated her to know it, after making such a sacrifice; but no matter now.) Then the old mother was taken down, and Dorla nursed them both, and none of the neighbors would come near them. George lay between life and death, six weeks and more, and then, poor fellow, (I always liked him, he was so good-natured!) then he died, and after that the mother. Then Dorla broke down at last, and had a frightful illness. I don't know whether it was the fever or what it was, but for some time she was in the greatest danger. Mamma was very kind; she sent up nurses, and a doctor, and everything that she could think of to make her comfortable. It must have been very lonely for the poor thing; but then she's always led a lonely kind of life. Her baby was born in May, and as soon as it was old enough, mamma insisted that she should come away from that dreadful place, and the last of June she came here with it for a week or two, and stayed while we looked up apartments for her. Thank Heaven, she has left Milford, and never wants to look at it again. There does not seem to be any one to do anything for her. The guardian, or the person who looks after her property (and she is quite well off, they say), is a stupid sort of person, who never seems to think *she* needs any care, and bestows it all upon her bonds and mortgages. She is now very comfortably fixed in pretty airy rooms, and has good servants. Mamma insists she must go out of town; but she

doesn't seem inclined to go with us, though mamma asked her, and seems disappointed. I suppose she wants to be more quiet. She promises to go somewhere bye and bye. But I don't think she ought to be alone. She really looks most shockingly. You'd never say she had ever been a pretty person. The child isn't in the least like her; a little white, scared-looking thing. I can't imagine what she sees in it. But then I am not fond of children. Now good-bye. This is the longest letter! Write to us from Florence, and tell us if you saw the Collinsons."

It was the first of February, when this letter came to Felix's hands; before the first of March he was in his mother's house in New York. They had gone to Washington for a month; Harriet found the winter in one place always too long for her. It was with some difficulty that he obtained the address of Mrs. Rothermel, but through the servants, it was got at last; and about noon the day after he landed in New York, he found himself standing on the steps of the house to which he had been directed.

It was a bleak March day, no sun, no warmth; a chill, strong wind, that cut through all defences, carried choking clouds of dust. Felix, a lover of soft air and Southern scents, could scarcely have told whether the wind blew cold or warm. His journey had been one long, impatient, ardent battle against tides and winds, which kept him from her; he had had but one thought; and now he had attained his wished-for haven, and in a moment more should look upon her face. The servant was not well instructed; in Dorla's house, perhaps, there were not many visitors. She led him through the hall, and ushered him without warning into a room where Dorla always spent her time. It was a sort of library, sitting-room, anything you please; a pretty room into which the sun shone when there was a sun, and which even now was light from the large windows, curtained with embroidered muslin. The carpet was light, the furniture graceful and modern. Dorla herself was in the room.

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When the door opened, she had her back towards it; with the baby in her arms she was standing before a picture. She turned listlessly when the door moved, as if she were not looking for agreeable surprises, and as if it were "all one" to her who came in, as long as they didn't take away the baby. It was not quite "all one" though, when her eyes fell on Felix. She started, and it seemed for a moment as if she could not speak; then she gave a little tight grasp to the child in her arms, and came slowly forward into the room to meet him.

He tried to speak steadily. In a moment it became easier to him, for he did not feel as if he spoke to Dorla. The change in her face, its great pallor, its great loss of beauty, but more than all its changed expression—her long black dress, her widow's cap, and above everything, the white-draped little baby hiding its face on her shoulder, staggered him as he looked. Her manner too. He had taught himself to believe that in years to come, if they should ever meet, his eyes would call that passionate color into her face, which they had never failed to call there since the last dance that they had danced together. And in all his troubles this had never had a part, that it was possible for her to change. And now a paltry year and a half had passed, and they were again together, and she *was* changed. It was not the pallor and the loss of beauty; that would only have made her dearer to him. But it was the indescribable something that had grown up since they parted, or that had faded away during the time that had elapsed. Perhaps, he tried to reassure himself, it was that he had been imagining so different a meeting, and because, strangely, he had given so little thought to the existence of the child. It gave him a fierce pang to see it in her arms; he had never thought of her in that way. He glanced away from the white snow-drop of a baby with a jealous hatred.

And the baby seemed to answer to his feeling for her. She drew herself away in a shrinking manner from him,

clutched her mother's dress, and laying her small, down-covered head on her mother's shoulder, kicked with her tiny feet, and looked at him from this position with a glance of animosity. She was not at all a pretty baby—very tiny, very white, with light eyes and no hair, but looking as if she knew more than a baby had a right to know. She was not ten months old, and in her light eyes there was the speculation and intelligence of ten years. Her demonstration of aversion, when Felix took her mother's hand, entirely restored the latter's self-possession, the startled look disappeared, her whole interest was centred on the child.

"Baby, what is it?" in an unutterably tender voice, that filled Felix with impotent wrath and jealousy. "What is it," putting her hand over the struggling little feet, and holding her closer as she sank into a sofa near. The baby, reassured, became quiet, but never lifted her head, and continued to gaze at Felix from her curious eyes. In a moment, for nothing beyond the most simple words of greeting had passed between them, Dorla said:

"I was not expecting to see you. I did not know that you were coming back. I wonder Harriet has not spoken of it."

"Harriet did not know that I was coming. It was quite a sudden movement."

"How happy it must make your mother! I think she always wishes you would stay at home."

"I have not seen my mother. You know they are in Washington."

"Yes, but I supposed you had been there."

"I only landed yesterday at six."

Dorla gave a quick sort of breath. She almost knew why he had come home, from that. "You will give them a great surprise. Do you go on to-day?"

"Probably not," he answered coldly. "There is time enough."

"I think you will find Mrs. Varian looking a little

older," said Dorla. "She has not been quite as well this winter. Still it is possibly not much. The change to Washington may do her good."

"The last thing to do anybody good as I remember it."

"But you know Mrs. Varian is different. She likes change, and is the better for excitement. And you, I think I've heard you say, only want rest and quiet, when you are not well."

"It is so seldom that I am not well, I scarcely know what I do want in that condition."

"You look well," she said, raising her eyes, unembarrassed, to his face, for a moment. Felix felt as if he were in a strange land indeed, everything was slipping away from him, the past, and what he had assured himself would be the future. That quiet, simple look of Dorla's eyes, as she said "you look well," and studied his face for an instant, absolutely stunned him.

"I wish that I could say the same of you," he said.

"I am much better than I have been," she answered matter-of-factly. "I believe I should have been better, if I had been in the country more last summer. But I was so weak, and it was such an effort to get away, and it was comfortable here. The doctor said it did not make any difference to baby while she was so young, and foolishly I stayed till August. I ought to have taken Mrs. Varian's advice. She urged me not to do it."

"Yes, Harriet wrote me of it. She said my mother was quite worried."

"Your mother has been so good to me," said Dorla, with sudden warmth of feeling. "I am very much alone, having no relations and so few friends; I don't know what I should have done without her—at—at the time of my great trouble." And here the tears swam in her eyes. "I never can forget her."

Felix felt a stony sort of wrath come over him. At the time of her great trouble! at the time of her great deliver-

ance, he should have thought she might have said. What was she thinking of that she failed to praise Providence for setting her free so soon? Were women all false, or were they all fools? Was there an accredited time of weeping, from which there could be no exemption? He found himself growing bitter towards this dreary widow. His face grew so hard and dark that baby grew afraid or peevish, and set up a little whine. She was not a baby to cry; she moaned and whined when she was not pleased. Instantly the little whine roused her mother to the keenest life.

"It is her teeth that trouble her, I am sure," she said. The child kicked again with her very small feet, and fretted with an added emphasis, and Dorla's face was clouded with anxiety. She rose and walked once or twice up and down the room, soothing the child with soft words, quite forgetting Felix.

"Excuse me one moment," she said, remembering him as she went towards the door.

Felix hoped that it was to send the little torment to the nurse up-stairs. But it was no such thing. It was only to have the rattle and some playthings brought to her. The nurse sat up-stairs all day blandly sewing, and all day and all night the baby was in Dorla's arms. When the nurse took her out into the street, Dorla walked in sight of the little carriage. When she drove herself, the baby was beside her.

While she stood at the door, and gave her orders to the nurse, Felix got up and walked impatiently about the room. And as he did so, his eye fell on a picture—the picture before which Dorla had been standing when he entered. It was a portrait of George Rothermel; strongly resembling him, but indefinitely flattered. It was the face of a very handsome man, young, grave, thoughtful. It was difficult to remember his smallness, his provincialism, and be patient with the artist. But there was no denying the resemblance: it was George Rothermel who looked down at you, only with an important element subtly interlined. Such an artist

ought to be crowned with bays immortal. The picture hung beside the window, where the day's best light shone full upon it; below it and beside were fastened brackets, and on these stood flowers, fresh and lovely, drooping before it, twined around it. It was a sort of shrine.

When Felix turned to meet Dorla re-entering the room, his face was cold and hard, and his voice as he addressed her, cynically measured. The detested baby was still in her arms.

"You must find the—the child a great care, Mrs. Rothermel."

"A care! O, no;" and Dorla's voice trembled with its unspoken feeling. She did not say in words, she is my life, my comfort, all I have to live for, as a more diffuse person would have said; but Felix could not misinterpret the tremble of her voice.

"It is a pleasure to see you so occupied and interested," he said with a bitter smile.

"Thank you," said Dorla with her eyes down, her pretty, slender hand passing and repassing softly over the baby's downy head.

"I had thought of you as—as alone and dreary. I see that is not so."

"No," said Dorla in a low tone, "I am never alone while I have my baby."

They had reseated themselves, when Dorla came back with the baby's toys. There was a moment's pause. Then Dorla said, making an effort to speak, so as to turn the conversation from herself before anything dangerous should come up:

"You have not told me anything of yourself—your journey. Has the winter been a pleasant one? I think Harriet said you were in Rome."

"Yes," said Felix with easy indifference. "I have been in Rome; the third winter I have spent there, and I think the pleasantest."



Dora involuntarily glanced at him to see if he meant this; and her eyes fell quickly. There was nothing in Felix's face to assure her that he had come home on her account. She did not understand exactly what she saw there.

They talked a little more, about indifferent things; and then the baby fretted again, and after she had soothed it anxiously into quiet, Felix saw on her face a little look of weariness. He started to his feet; this stung him more than all. In the half hour or less he had spent here, he had seen her, a little startled, a little cold, a little frightened and a little weary. All the life, all the interest that her face had shown, had been called there by the fretting baby in her arms. He left her, he hardly knew how; he hoped afterwards that he had not betrayed the passion that he felt. But it was some bitter comfort to think she probably had not been at the pains to speculate about it.

And this was the end! Harder, harder far than "the end" before. He went out into the street and set his face against the biting March wind, and walked fast and fierce. The disappointment was very cruel. When he was in her presence he had been too angry to feel the whole weight of his sorrow; though he was still as angry, he began to feel what it meant to him, and what a chasm had opened in his life. The belief that she loved him had been the food as well as the poison of his soul. Now the food and the poison were both gone, and he already felt the agony of starvation seizing on him. He had been living in a dream this year and a half—a hopeless, enervating dream. No woman had ever been more constant, even in hourly thought, than he had been. He had carried the thought of her through every land; things present had passed before him as a misty pageant; and she had been the one reality.

And he could not understand it; he was so angry that he would have been glad to have believed her false, light and trifling, feigning a love she did not feel, and then feigning a sorrow as unreal. But this he could not, after his first fury

of disappointment, bring himself to think. Dorla was true, whoever might be false; she had loved him once, she loved him now no more. Her nature was so transparent to him, he never could doubt that he read aright. But what had wrought the transformation; what had chilled her towards him, and put in his place this shadowy ideal of the husband whom she had never loved?

Felix thought he knew Dorla well; but no one person can know another unless he has entered into the other's life, lived with him in imagination, or beside him in reality. This was what Felix failed to take into account. The year and a half had been to him a smooth, uneventful period outwardly; inwardly, simply and entirely full of her. It had been to her a cruel and suffering time, filled with hard and bitter events, crowding upon each other. Imagination had had little room for play; physical suffering, and the sight of physical suffering; a burden of care, an overtrial of strength; suspense, fear, death; the hard minutiae of bereavement; the grinding details of funerals and burials; the coarse trial of necessary household changes; all these had been in Dorla's lot, and had made imagination dead in her. And this without counting the dark places she had passed through in her succeeding illness; the abyss of suffering into which she had been plunged; the entrance into a new heaven of love by a roadway worse than death. All this Felix failed to take into account. He could read her face, but he had not read her life, and so he failed to understand.

Dorla held the baby in her arms, and whispered "we are glad that he is gone;" and involuntarily drew near the window and watched him go away, holding the child's atom of a hand against her cheek, and wondering in her heart that she had no feeling—no feeling good or bad. She was in truth a little weary, and was glad that he was gone.

"George is avenged, poor George," she said to herself, walking to the picture and looking long at it. She tried to think she had strong feeling as she looked; she had, in a

way ; he was the father of this child who had transformed her life, and he was, in a measure, glorified. Between the time that he had disappointed and disgusted her, and now, there had been a time of great and cruel suffering to witness. He had been thrown upon her tenderness and care ; she had passed with him through deep waters ; she had stood by him when the awful tide rose over him, and he had gone down with his eyes fixed on her. One does not forget such companionship. Dorla thought that she had grown to love her husband before she was parted from him ; after he was gone she had not any doubt of it. When her child was born she had wept his death afresh, and vowed to make reparation for her want of love by devotion to his memory and by making him a reality to the child he had never seen. Her imagination and her conscience had done him good service, aided by the artist whose work had roused so bitter a contempt in Felix. She was living an unreal life, but there did not happen to be any one to tell her of it. Unreal, that is, as regarded the memory of her husband, and unhealthy as regarded her excessive devotion to her child ; but as far as her physical life was concerned, as matter-of-fact and inevitable as if she had had no imagination and no conscience. Her illness had left her prostrated in strength ; the child for whom she chose to live, drained daily from her, her little stock of health and vigor. Who does not know the weariness, the dulness, that comes with loss of bodily strength ? how differently the world looks,—how low the tide of love and hatred ebbs ! Dorla was “*awearied*.” She was low in tone, she was dull in thought, she was listless and unenergetic. She thought it was wholly because George was dead, and her life had suffered a great change—because she had turned from her appalling sin and was received repentant back to virtue ; but it was partly too because the rich current of her blood was pale and chilled, and nerves and tissues, of which she did not even know the name, were weakened and degenerated. She felt feebly thankful for her emancipation, and touched her

dreary widow's dress with a sort of reverence. She thought of herself as no longer a young woman; and the future had only Baby in it, and poor people, and church, and humble weary work.

And so she sent Felix away, not quite sure that she had sent him, but feeling it vaguely, and seeing it in his fierce, quick walk, as he went down the street, and in his compressed lips and fiery eyes. "George is avenged, poor George!" she said to herself, holding the baby tight, and walking up and down the room.

Yes, in a way, poor George *was* signally avenged.

**N**EW YORK is a big place; it is quite possible to live in it a good many years, and never see a person whom you do not seek, who may be living there as well. Felix, after he saw his mother, had not the heart to go away again. Dorla was right; she had aged very much. She clung to Felix, and he never even hinted at the possibility of going away again. Fortunately for him, they were not very much in the city. There were the usual summer absences, and the winters now must be mostly spent in Florida. He was henceforth a good son, and did his duty with tenderness, but he had a very bitter and desolate heart, which even his mother's newly shown affection could not soothe. He would have been glad to go very far away. He felt as if it kept him sore to have to know that Dorla lived so near him; he had to hear her name sometimes, and to know that she had been at the house. He had to answer Harriet's questions, and to sustain himself under his mother's more penetrating eyes. But he managed to deceive them both.

"You see," said Harriet, with a good-natured sneer, if such a thing is possible; "you see it is as I told you it would be. He doesn't want her now that he can have her."

"Yes, I see," said Mrs. Varian, with a little sigh. It was a disappointment to her, but she did not talk about it.

Poor woman ! Everything was growing a vague and weary disappointment to her, with the receding strength and spirits that had made her life so comfortable. But she was not bitter, and she made no moan. Only she began to see things differently, and to wish deep down in her heart that she had seen them so before the days came when she "had no pleasure in them."

Harriet could not give up the world, and so for the two years that she still lived, the house was not a dull one. There was a dull sick room in it, though ; ah, such a dull and weary one ! But no complaint came from it, and the household life went on as usual. At this time Felix would have been very glad if he could have married, or could have found any charm in society. But there is a point beyond which one cannot force one's self : and it was all worse than weary to him. Not that he fancied that he still loved Doria. He was too angry and bitter and disappointed, to fancy that ; but somehow, that year-and-a-half-long dream had taken out of reality all flavor of enjoyment. It was a mercy that he had one duty and that he recognized it. He perhaps was saved, by the performance of that duty, from much evil and despair.

And when the two years were ended, and in a dreary southern exile the poor mother passed into a longer exile from the things that she had loved, Felix rose up manlier and more courageous than he had given promise. Business life is not very exalted or exalting, but it is better than idleness. He was freed from New York ; he was tired of Europe. A chance word at a ripe moment turned his thoughts to a life in California. He did not turn pastoral and buy a sheep farm as the heroes in English novels do in Australia, after they have suffered disappointment in matters of the heart at home ; neither did he do anything poetical or pasto-

ral. But he went into business in San Francisco in a most prosaic way, and made a great deal of money, which isn't at all to the purpose, as he had plenty of that before. But he also made occupation and interest for himself, and developed a business ability that helped his self-respect, and entered upon a life that was really, in its way, useful and invigorating.

Harriet, meanwhile, had not much need of him or of any one. She led much the sort of life that she had led before, except that she took rather a wider range, and allowed her enthusiasm to lead her somewhat further away than formerly from the strictest good society. But she had always been eclectic, and nobody was ever surprised at anything she did. Also no one criticised her with any great severity, because she had plenty of money, and used it very lavishly. She never ceased to be of importance wherever she appeared. Felix did not feel uneasy about her, neither did he feel any great desire for her companionship. It would be hardly possible for sister and brother to love each other less, and yet be friends. They wrote to each other with regularity, and Felix was scrupulous in the care of her property, but there it seemed to end.

Finally, after three years of this expatriation, Felix felt a sort of undefined desire to see home again. He could not quite account for it; possibly, it was because he was getting a little restless. He had never been so long in one place before. He tried to put it on his duty to Harriet.

"Anyway, I'll go for a month or two at least, and take a little rest."

And so he went. This was five years and four months after the day when he had left Dorla before George's picture, with the black dress and the widow's cap, and the heavy eyes, and the white atom of a baby in her arms. He had never seen her since that day, and he always thought of her with these adjuncts. Since his mother's death, he had never even heard her name. He sometimes thought it possible

that she was no longer living. At times he had a dreamy sort of desire to know what had been her fate, and what the fate of her little child. But it was only at times. By-gones were by-gones, and life was full and busy.

## IV.



ANADA and the Lakes ! It seemed to Felix like a dream, to be passing through these scenes again. He lived more in that past vision than he had done for a long time ; he sauntered leisurely where he had once hurried fiercely : he philosophized over his infatuation, he compared himself with the man he had been then, with a shiver of fear and a sigh of regret. For while he felt himself healthy and sound again, far removed from such passionate folly, he felt in his heart the sweetness of the madness ; he sighed to remember it was a delirium that could never come again. He had long ceased to feel bitterly towards Dorla. He now began to think of her with a tender sort of remembrance. He felt that he could estimate her character more truly, her mystic strength, her pitiable weakness. He could almost forgive her that she had ceased to love him, though he could not understand it. He began to think less and less of her as the cold widow in her dreary weeds, the absorbed mother with her fragile baby, and more and more of her as the Helen of his imagination,

“ Daughter of the Gods, divinely tall  
And most divinely fair—”

He thought of those brief, gay days “ when they were first acquaint,” of those passionate and wearing weeks, when she was struggling against his cruel and sinful love. He began to wonder about her : he admitted to himself that he should like to see her, if chance threw him in her path.

“ When I see Harriet, I must remember to ask her where



she is," he said to himself, with a funny attempt at self-deception. As if there was any danger that he would not remember to ask Harriet. Harriet was at Lake Memphremagog. She had found a new place and was enraptured with it. She had also found a party of artists who afforded her amusement; she was very glad to know Felix was coming, but she did not seem to be impatient to see him. So Felix took his time and made the circuit of the Lakes on his way to her. The weather was unusually good. He felt in fine health; he had been out of the way of travelling just long enough to make it an enjoyment; there was nothing but the fact that he was alone, to take from the pleasure of the journey. At Montreal that objection was removed.

Late in the afternoon of the day he arrived there, he was leisurely making his way along Notre Dame Street, when his eye was caught by the troubled face of a young and pretty girl, who was hurrying along the sidewalk, and peering into the maze of vehicles that obstructed the street. Then she ran back towards a shop and called out,

"Mamma, mamma, the fellow has gone off, and we shall be left!"

But mamma was too far back in the shop, and too engrossed with her traffic to give heed, and the girl ran out again, and looked again, and went around the corner, and came back looking as if she wanted to cry. That was too bad. She was too pretty to be allowed to cry. So Felix approached her, and said with such distinguished courtesy as to make it impossible to doubt him,

"Can I be of any assistance in finding your carriage for you?"

Her face brightened, the cloud passed away, and the sun burst out, (she was only seventeen, and Felix was still the handsomest of the handsome.) "Yes, I think so, that is, I am much obliged to you. We have only half an hour before the starting of the boat, and ever so many things to do. I don't know where the man has gone."

"Perhaps to see what the crowd is about on the block below," said Felix. "I have no doubt I can find him if you will tell me what sort of a carriage it is."

"O, it is one of those one-horse things, all gilt and glass," returned the young lady. "I don't know what you call them. And the driver's a Canadian with black eyes and reddish hair, and speaks abominable French. They all look alike; I don't know how to make you understand."

"Perhaps if you went with me—" said Felix.

She gave him a doubtful look, and then moved forward across the street. "This is rather droll," she said naively, with a little laugh, after they had walked a few steps quickly and in silence.

"But better than being left, perhaps," he said demurely.

"O, yes, a good deal."

They reached the opposite sidewalk, and Felix found a doorstep for her, that commanded a good view of the crowd of vehicles beyond. "Can you see him anywhere among them?" he said, watching her eyes.

She looked rather disheartened, and said no. "What shall I do?" she exclaimed; "and there were a dozen parcels in the carriage, and a sealskin sack and two silk dresses. We have been shopping all the afternoon."

Felix thought the fellow had made off with the "plunder," and began to be in earnest. "What sort of a horse was it? Can't you remember? I will go and find an officer."

"I can't remember," said the girl, following him. "I do not think I looked. O, yes. Now I do remember; the horse was grey, and had such hideous shoulder-blades."

Felix was amused. They hurried forward, and in a few moments, out of sight, behind a loaded truck, Felix found the grey horse with the shoulder-blades, standing with his head down and his worst foot lifted patiently before the vehicle "all gilt and glass," quite unconscious of the sealskin sack and the two silk dresses in his charge. The young lady gave a cry of relief.

"Now to find the driver," said Felix. But that was not so easy to do. The plot had thickened evidently in the direction of the crowd. There was no officer to be found of course. Felix went in and out among the outer loungers, and shouted and asked questions, but all to no avail; in a moment he came back to the young girl, who stood with her watch in her hand, and an anxious expression on her face."

"We shall be left," she said. "The wretch!"

"I don't know what to suggest," said Felix. "Unless you let me drive you to your hotel or wherever you want to go."

"We want to go to the Quebec boat," she said. "We have just left the hotel and sent our baggage down, and we were doing some last shopping on our way."

Felix wondered what the first shopping must have been when the last included a sealskin sack, two silk dresses and nine other packages. "Well, I see nothing for it, but for you to let me drive you."

Between anxiety and amusement, the young girl knew hardly what to do. "We'll see what mamma says," she answered slowly.

"Very well, I will lead the horse if you will go on," returned Felix, taking the beast by the head and walking along as near the sidewalk as was possible.

Meantime, his companion hurried forward, and met on the corner, a stout, elderly, well-dressed person, who fell (apparently) to upbraiding her for having given her so much anxiety. The mother and daughter were both evidently excitable and given to speak their minds; though he could not hear, he could see from the gesticulations and flushed faces, that there was much difference of opinion. He went as slowly as possible, to let the agitation cool before he joined the party, but in their own interest he felt he should not linger. It was just eighteen minutes now to seven o'clock. He could not help hearing the mother say, as he

brought the ungainly horse to a stand-still in front of the corner shop,

"Better be left a hundred times, than do such a crazy thing as this."

"Well, then, *be* left, and break up the party," cried the girl impetuously. And again she looked as if she certainly would cry.

That mollified Felix, who caught sight of her face. He had meant to petrify the ungrateful mother, by bowing and withdrawing, and leaving them to get to the boat as best they could; but the girl was much too pretty to be made to cry. He assumed his most distinguished and high-bred manner, and turned to the elder lady with a bow. She moved forward to confront him with flushed dignity and a frown. But the words died on his lips, and the frown vanished from her face as their eyes met.

"Mr. Varian!" she cried, and bursting into a laugh, put out her hand.

"Well, Mrs. Glover," said Felix, laughing as he took it, "you looked as if you were going to send me off."

"I was, indeed," she said, good-humoredly. "I don't like my daughter to be so eloquent about anonymous hackmen. For she is grown up. See! This is Abby, the little girl you helped to write French exercises, seven years ago. Imagine it! What a little fright she then was, with her hair *à la* Kenwigs."

"Well, I don't remember *that*," said Felix, bowing to the young beauty, whose eyes were dancing with interest and excitement.

"Mamma! And you know him after all! It ought to be a lesson to you to believe a person is a gentleman when I tell you so."

"Come, come," said the mother, too much pleased with the encounter to be severe upon her daughter, "there is no time to lose, if we are going to Quebec to-night, and if Mr.

Varian is still willing to drive us to the wharf, now that he knows so much about us."

They got into the carriage quickly, and Felix took the reins.

"You'll have to tell me the streets," he said, "for it is five years since I have been in Montreal."

"This way," said Abby, pointing; but somehow her zeal for catching the boat was fast abating.

"How long are you staying in Montreal, Mr. Varian?" said the mother.

"O, a day or two, perhaps. I have no fixed policy, I am only drifting."

But at this moment they found themselves the centre of an excited crowd. It is surprising how Canadian cabmen gather, from all points of the compass, like "birds of evil wing;" they are around you in a moment; you cannot tell from whence they come. This time they were headed by the enraged and terrified owner of the grey horse, and much be-gilded carriage. They were present to sympathize with him, and also to take the chance of a fare, if he and the travellers should come to open rupture. It was very difficult to understand his Canadian jargon, or to make him understand that he deserved a horse-whipping. Still, Felix was fierce enough in correct French to make the ladies turn pale, and the man, quite subdued and very repentant, crept up to the seat beside him, and assumed the reins, with liberal promises of getting them to the pier five minutes before the steamboat started. The crowd dispersed, the carriage bounced and rattled fiercely over the stones, and Felix turned to resume his conversation.

"Now," said Mrs. Glover, clutching the side of the carriage, "is not this reckless driving?"

"He will break our necks for us," said Abby, discontentedly. It was evident she was in less of a hurry than she had been before. Felix ordered him to go more carefully, and then it was possible to talk.

"Why don't you join us, Mr. Varian?" said Mrs. Glover. "We have a pleasant party, rather scattered to be sure at present; but we are to meet at Quebec and go up the Saguenay. Why cannot you come down the river to-morrow night and join us? Some of our party are coming on to-night, and some of them possibly to-morrow night. We shall not certainly start for the Saguenay till the day after. It really would be very pleasant."

"I am sure it would," said Felix, non-committal. But Abby looked so anxious and so breathless, he had not the heart to be non-committal long. There was also no earthly reason why he should refuse. He had meant to go up the Saguenay, and probably if he had not met them, would have taken the boat that they would take the day after to-morrow. So he had no excuse for keeping the pretty Abby any longer in suspense. (It is probable if it had been very inconvenient, he would have gone, she was so very pretty.)

In a moment's time it was all arranged, and Abby was radiant. She had the most ingenuous way of not disguising any of her emotions; a delightful way, when they were all as flattering as this last one to Felix. He thought her a most charming creature, and tried to remember all he could about the French exercises and the long braids. But in those days she had made no impression. There were a hundred things to ask and to plan about the projected journey, and they found themselves at the wharf sooner than had seemed possible. Felix carried on board the most bulky of the precious packages; saw to their luggage; got the key of their state-room; paid the cabman; in short, made himself guide, philosopher and friend. There were yet three minutes to spare.

"How I wish you were going down to-night!" said Abby, following him out upon the deck, where he had gone to hunt up chairs for them.

"Yes," said Felix, thinking drearily of the reading-room

and his stuffy apartment at St. Lawrence Hall. "Yes, if I only were, I should be very glad."

"You'll surely come to-morrow night?" she asked, with momentary distrust darkening her eyes as she fixed them keenly on him. Probably she had been disappointed before by people who had made fair promises.

"Surely," he said, amused and fascinated, returning her gaze in a way that made her blush, and that was quite unjustifiable after an acquaintance of something less than three-quarters of an hour. When he parted from her, I am ashamed to say, he would have liked to kiss her; and he held her warm, ungloved hand in his for a quarter of a minute, while he was making some unnecessary adieux to her mamma. She leaned over the boat and talked to him on the pier; and when the boat moved off, looked so childishly sorrowful, it stirred his very heart. "It is better than being alone," he said, as he mingled with the crowd again, "to have some one glad when you come and sorry when you go, even if it is a child."

Then he reflected that he had been a fool for being flattered; and before he was back at the hotel, was quite ashamed for having committed himself to what opened like a most pronounced flirtation. "This comes of living out of the world for a little while," he said, as he remembered the look of satisfaction on the mother's face. "I had forgotten how desirable I was: it will be a regular pursuit."

He resolved to be on his guard; he even determined to give up the Saguenay. Mrs. Glover he remembered as a gay, good-natured woman of society, harmless and rather headstrong; but that was when her only daughter was eating bread and butter in the nursery. There was no knowing what might be developed by the maternal instinct set a hunting; she might be a very dangerous person. He even wrote a telegram, regretting that he could not come. But that he tore up the next morning; he began to feel very much as if he wanted company—it was dull work travelling alone. Beside, he

had intended to go up the Saguenay : it was rather weak to be turned from it by a pair of women. Probably he could protect himself. So he did his duty by the nunneries and churches, and went drearily around the mountain ; and before dinner was quite weary of the place. He could not possibly have stayed longer ; he was not going to Quebec to meet the Glovers, but to get away from Montreal. During the afternoon, there was nothing to do but to shop, so he laid in a supply of story-books and bonbons, to ameliorate the dulness of the Saguenay journey for the youthful Abby.

To avoid all danger of being left, he went on board the steamboat at twenty minutes before seven, settled his valise in his state-room, and went out upon the deck. " There is nothing like having plenty of time," he said, a little ashamed of himself, looking at his watch. But after all he could not have done better ; this was the best view he had had in Montreal. The evening sky was cloudless ; in front of him, upon the wharf, was a busy crowd of wagoners and teamsters shouting in Canadian French ; far behind them rose the heavy stone-work of the Pier Richelieu and the pier Jacques Cartier—ships lay at anchor both up and down the stream ; a canal boat lay snugly up beside the pier, bare-armed and bare-headed women leaning over her sides to enjoy the evening breeze ; the men in the rigging of the ships were moving listlessly about ; you might have heard them singing if you had been near enough to hear, and some gay flags were flying. There was great breadth and freedom in the prospect ; no huddling of ships together ; no crowding of boats about the pier ; the wide river was spanned in the distance by the Victoria bridge, but that seemed far away. Beyond the pier rose splendid warehouses ; a wide *place* opened up the hill, and upon the top stood the Nelson statue, in fine relief against the evening sky. The carriages and people who moved along the street beside the monument, looked coal-black ; the trees stood out like charcoal sketches. The sky was most pure and cloudless ; there was no wind ; the



day had been hot, but the cool of evening was stealing over the water and through the air. Even with the gesticulating crowd of Frenchmen at their wagons below, it was impossible not to feel cool and quiet, and as if the end of the day had come. There were no evil smells, no crushing, crowding and bustling. An ideal way of doing business with all that sky and river, and fine masonry and open space. Felix thought of some blocks of New York water front; the contrast made this *entrée* to commercial Montreal like the frontispiece in a fairy tale.

He walked up and down the deck, penetrated and soothed with the beauty of the hour. Gradually more people came on board, and half a dozen came near where he paced, and took their seats. One well-dressed man sat down and turned his back upon the Pier Richelieu and the broad *place*, and the Nelson monument, and the evening sky, and read a yellow-covered novel; another took out his pocket-diary and spent fifteen minutes in adjusting the record of his travelling expenses. He thought them very inferior creatures—what we generally think of people whom we meet in travelling. At length the time approached for the moving of the steamer down the river. One bell had sounded, and there was an increased fervor in the oaths of the Frenchmen below among the barrels of cabbages and melons. Felix, in a little maze, stood leaning over the rail and gazing back upon the city, thinking of the last restless, unobservant voyage he had made down this same broad river, five years ago; when he was made aware of some little excitement among his fellow-passengers. He of the yellow-covered novel had shut his book, and the accurate traveller had put away his memoranda, and both had started towards the other side of the boat. Another boat had neared them, was drawing minute by minute closer to their side.

“The boat that’s just come down the rapids,” said the yellow-covered man; “she’s going to transfer some passengers.”

Then Felix felt but little interest, and wondered at the curiosity of his fellow-travellers; still he idly drew near, and stood among a line of others, face to face with the voyagers on the other boat, which was still rocking slightly and was still not quite alongside. There were many calls below, and much throwing of ropes and clanking of chains. The boats were separated by but a few feet now; nobody was talking—all were looking. The passengers on the other boat had a sun-burned, flushed, excited look, as if they had just come down the rapids (which they had).

Felix's eye ranged carelessly down the rows of faces opposite him. Then he gave a start and gazed again, steadying himself with his hand on the rail. It was so unexpected, he explained to himself afterwards. It *always* gives one a feeling of excitement to see the face of a friend or even an acquaintance without any warning among the strange faces of a crowd. It was Dorla whom he looked at—Dorla, not as he remembered her, not as he saw her last, but so uniquely herself that he had not had a moment of misgiving. Her face was a little sunburnt and flushed, and her eyes had a startled look, for no doubt she had been frightened coming down the rapids; it had taken much less to frighten her in days of old. She stood gazing before her with an absent sort of look, as if she had gone through so much in the matter of the rapids, she did not think it worth while to interest herself in the landing of the boat. For a moment Felix saw no one else; then she moved slightly, and turned to answer some one beside her who spoke, still absently, though amiably.

This one who spoke to her (Felix looked at him with fierce and sudden suspicion) was apparently little occupied with the objects that occupied the others, but solely and utterly with her. It is so easy to see a man's devotion; even the porter who stood laden with bags and shawls behind them, saw this one's. There was something in Dorla's pre-occupied manner that struck Felix with the sudden convic-

tion that this was her husband, and that she had married again without affection. She certainly looked well; she certainly did not look unhappy. This was the end; Felix could have wished the last few days undone, and that he had not wasted a dreaming thought upon her.

In a moment more, the boats were securely fastened, the plank thrown across, and the two whom he was gazing on as in an unwilling spell, moved forward; and he started and turned away and gazed upon the city, and tried to blot out from his memory that sight of Dorla, leaning on the stranger's arm. But though the

“—evening fair as ever  
Shines on ruin, rock, and river,”

its peaceful charm was at an end for him. What had Dorla, living or dead, to do with it? Nothing, logically; but here it was spoiled by her shadow falling on it, as she had spoiled many a morning and many an evening for him before. Why had fate not been content to let him rest?

He laughed a little bitter laugh to himself as he turned away; at least, he would not disturb her serenity for the second time, if he had the power. It would be too bad to trouble the peace, too, of this respectable gentleman; he would have a care. He might be more sensitive than the lamented George. He would try to avoid them. He hoped they had not set their hearts upon the Saguenay! No doubt if Dorla found there was any such complication probable, she would go into a fainting fit, like one of those she had done so handsomely in that remote period prior to her widowhood, and would have to keep her state-room, or be taken off the boat. Surely, they need not get into high tragedy at their time of life. It was very base and low in Felix to have thoughts like these, but indeed he was so angry and so stung by a man's silly pride and dread of usurpation, that he scarcely knew what he thought or what he looked. He walked rapidly up and down the deck, after the

steamer blew her whistle and swung off into the stream ; his coat was buttoned up, and his hands plunged into his pockets ; his face was hard, and his step almost vindictive ; he looked neither to the right hand nor to the left. A little child flitted across the deck, followed languidly by a white-capped French nurse. Her broad Leghorn hat flapped over her eyes at an inopportune moment ; she was prostrate at Felix's feet, and his heavy unobservant tread came down upon her tiny, outstretched hand. She gave a shrill cry of pain and fear. Felix, suddenly and unpleasantly recalled to the present, stooped over her and picked her up. It put him in an agony to think that he had hurt her, but at the same time he was angry and unreasonable.

"You should take better care," he said. "Let me see your finger."

Her only answer was a passionate cry, and a violent struggle to get out of his arms.

"Ha ! " he said, holding her tight, "you want me to put you down on the deck again, for the next person to walk over, do you ? "

Then the slim little creature writhed herself almost out of his arms, but he was angry and cruel, and meant not to put her down till he was ready. She used her hands and her feet too, and kicked him with all her tiny strength.

"You are a little vixen," he said, standing her down upon the seat that encircled the deck, but still holding her by one arm. "Now show me your hand, and let me see if you are hurt."

For all answer, she thrust her hand out of sight in her dress, and twisted her face away from him. She was white with pain and anger, and she shook all over, but she did not cry. By this time the pensive French nurse came up to where he stood, and shrugged her shoulders as if in sympathy with him, and as if the child were hopeless.

"It will be better for Monsieur to go away," she said ; and Monsieur went away, saying as he went,

"I see I cannot do her any good. I am very sorry if I hurt her."

He watched the nurse go away with her. The wind blew her hat off, and he saw her face. She was not a pretty child; she was very fair, with blonde hair, soft and thin and fine, that stood out in a little frizz like a glory round her head. Her nose was *retroussé*, her eyes were light and passionate. She was very small, she had felt like a doll to Felix when he lifted her. She was dressed very daintily in white, with a great brown sash around her waist, which the nurse straightened, instead of paying any attention to the hurt little hand. They disappeared into the saloon, Felix's glance following them with a wish that that might be the last that he might see of them.

He had not even the satisfaction of marching up and down like a caged lion any more; this encounter had spoiled even that for him. He was afraid of walking over another child; he felt thoroughly ill-tempered. "Maybe I could find rest in the baggage-room," he said to himself, in wrath, as he begged a lady's pardon for moving a chair that she had appropriated in her mind to some companion who had not yet appeared. He endured this for half an hour, and then made a surly resolution to get his tea, and bolt himself into his state-room afterward, to escape the persecutions and temptations of the world. This monastic fury was not abated when he found himself at the door of the saloon, face to face with the stranger whom he had seen with Dorla. This time he had a different companion, an elderly woman in deep widow's weeds. She was leaning heavily on his arm, and he was also carrying several shawls. Not having that lively interest in Felix that Felix had in him, he said: "I beg your pardon," without looking at him particularly, which begging of pardon was an invitation to get out of the way, and let him pass with his heavy freight.

Felix was a gentleman, but it took all of his traditions and instincts to prevent him from being very rude. He

stood aside; as the lady passed him, she glanced into his face; and then glanced again, and made a half movement to put out her hand. Felix saw at once that it was some one that he knew, but who, it was impossible for him to say. His first impulse was to appear not to see; he was just in the mood to resent bitterly the common bondage of society. But he was too good a gentleman to follow out this impulse; he could not prevent himself from giving a faint and distant salutation. But elderly women are persistent.

"I am sure I cannot be mistaken," she said, stopping in the doorway. "It is Mr. Varian."

As soon as she spoke, Felix knew that it was Mrs. Bishop. A host of recollections came over him, of his mother, and of their long kind feeling.

He put out his hand; "For the moment, I was not sure. I am so glad you spoke."

Some one came pushing through the door, and she was obliged to move on; Felix followed her. She sat down, as if tired, in the nearest chair, and motioned Felix to a seat beside her.

"You have been living in California? I hear of you sometimes through Harriet. Harriet is not with you, my dear, is she?"

It was so long since any one, young or old, had said "my dear" to him, that his heart relaxed.

"No," he said, gently. "I have not seen Harriet since I came back. I am on my way to her."

"Aunt Hester," said the unnoticed and patient bearer of shawls, "I will leave you here a moment and see if they are ready to come out."

"Yes, and Henry," returned Mrs. Bishop, "tell her to come right away; and see if she cannot be persuaded to leave Missy, and come down to tea."

This observation filled Felix with chagrin, and broke up all his feelings of satisfaction in seeing Mrs. Bishop. She also seemed recalled to something painful, and looked fur-

tively at him. It was evident that in the pleasure of seeing him, she had forgotten the entanglements of that last Milford summer; for some reason she seemed much perplexed and troubled. Felix's pride instantly took alarm.

"She is trying to prepare a speech to soften the blow to me," he said to himself, with disdain. "I shall be the object of much female pity. It is supposed, no doubt, I have been dragging a miserable existence for the last five years, and have come pitifully back to be stabbed by the cruel news, before my foot is absolutely on my native heath."

Following the sarcasm out, he prepared himself to meet Dorla with suavity; he allowed Mrs. Bishop no moment to preface the meeting. He talked so glibly on subjects of indifference that the poor lady was bewildered and followed humbly, not being so agile of mind as formerly. In about a quarter of an hour, there was a sort of pause; Felix himself was a little remiss, he had been watching the door of the saloon so intently that he lost the thread of his discourse.

"I don't know why Henry doesn't come," Mrs. Bishop began, uneasily. "Perhaps—"

"I am afraid you are feeling the evening air," said Felix, with assiduity. "Shall I put this shawl over you? One feels the chill so soon after the sun goes down, and there is quite a breeze to-night."

"Yes, quite," returned Mrs. Bishop, reminded of her elderly infirmities. "I don't altogether fancy these night boats—but Henry and Dorla both assured me I should be quite comfortable. By the way, Mr. Varian, did you know—"

But what it was, did not transpire; at that moment, the two people for whom he had been watching, appeared in the doorway, "Henry" preceding and clearing the way for her as for his sovereign, and standing aside and offering her his hand as she stepped across the sill of the door. The evening was still clear, though the sun had gone down nearly an hour. The river looked dark and broad, and the steamer

moved steadily onward with little noise or movement. Dorla glanced around for Mrs. Bishop, and catching sight of her came forward with a bright, affectionate face.

"You are tired of waiting for me," she said, "but Missy would not let me off a moment sooner."

Felix had arisen when he saw them coming, and, standing behind Mrs. Bishop's chair, had appeared to Dorla as any of the passengers, of whom there were a number on the deck.

"No, I am not tired of waiting," said Mrs. Bishop, with painfully evident constraint. "I have found an old friend on board. It will be quite a surprise to you, Dorla. Here is Mr. Varian."

It *was* quite a surprise to her. She looked up suddenly towards him, as Mrs. Bishop turned to indicate him, and the bright, easy look died out of her face; there came an expression with which Felix was familiar. Then all feeling, good or bad, went under swift control, and she put out her hand unaffectedly to him, and said some commonplace, but sufficiently cordial, words of greeting.

Felix, notwithstanding that he had been getting up his part for half an hour, did much less well than she. He only succeeded in being stiff, and then unnaturally easy, if the thing is possible. There was, after the first few moments, something subtly detestable in his manner. Dorla alone felt it, in wonder and distress. She was quite pale, and almost silent. The two gentlemen and Mrs. Bishop kept up the few moments' desultory talk, before going down to tea was canvassed. Dorla was appealed to; Felix had arisen.

"It is so beautiful out here now," said she, keeping her seat.

"Then let us wait a little longer," said Henry, with fervent acquiescence.

"But there will be nothing left," said Mrs. Bishop, plaintively. "Those hungry creatures rushing down the stairs will eat up everything."

"I am afraid, from what I hear, Mrs. Bishop," said Fe-



lix, "that you will wish they had eaten everything up, when you go down."

"Now, Henry assured me I should have a very decent meal. Henry, what do you say to this?"

While Henry was reassuring his aunt on this vital point, Felix excused himself, and went down to the heated and noisy dining-room. He spent but a few moments in it, and then went away to smoke. For half an hour he smoked, and then went forward, meaning to go directly to his state-room. He did not feel equal to the renewal of this intercourse, and hoped, with a bitter vehemence, that he might escape, ever in this life, another meeting with one who brought so many unhappy memories with her. A crowd of people were about his state-room door, inspecting "views" and Indian curiosities so-called. He could not enter it without asking persons to move, and quite possibly those he meant to avoid might be among the group. So, having left them on the forward deck, he thought himself safe in going to the stern of the boat, and walking for a few moments, till he saw the way clear to his room-door.

The moon had come out in full splendor, and a long track of light lay behind them on the water. The sky was still faintly yellow about the clear horizon, and darkly blue above, and the lights along the shore seemed distant. The air, too, was fresh and delicious to one coming from within. Felix walked to the stern of the boat with a freer feeling. It seemed so dark, coming out of the lighted saloon. All the passengers walking about or sitting in groups, were like maskers. He could have told no one's face. He stood still for a moment, at the stern, looking steadfastly back upon the glittering waters. A soft voice said, exactly at his elbow—

"I had no idea the country was so level here, had you?"

It was Dorla's voice, and it might have been said to him, or to her Henry who stood close beside her. Felix ground

his teeth. This was fate! He had walked directly into the very group he had been trying to avoid. He did not care what they thought, he only wanted to spare himself the sting of feeling that the sight occasioned. They talked together (as was unavoidable,) for a few moments, about the river, and then, as he was planning to get away, Mrs. Bishop arose and proposed to Dorla to go in. Mrs. Bishop had been so thrown back by Felix's changed manner, and by other reasons possibly, that she had not much pleasure in his society, it was evident.

"Is it necessary quite so soon?" said Dorla. "It is so beautiful here in the moonlight, and Missy will surely wake if I go in just yet."

"We can sit in the saloon," said Mrs. Bishop. "I am sure it is too chilly here."

"In a little while I will come in," returned Dorla, showing she had developed a little more self-assertion in these past five years.

"Well, Henry, if you will give me your arm, said Mrs. Bishop, with resignation; and the two moved away.

There was only a moment of silence, and then Dorla said, "Tell me about Harriet. It is so long since I have seen her."

The tone, which was gentleness and courtesy itself, had something more about it than courtesy and gentleness. It said, "Forgive me, if you can, for whatever I have done against you; and take my forgiveness for whatever I have suffered at your hands. Let us be kind friends, since we can be nothing more, and do not wound or goad me by this strange demeanor."

Felix was not insensible to it, but it only added to his bitterness. He perversely wrought it into pity, and he would not be pitied. "See how kindly she is soothing me!" he said to himself, with venom. "She takes this moment of the absence of her Henry to reconcile me to existence. She would do all she could in conscience to save me from

despair. I am not sure but she would flirt a little with me, the tender, pious creature, if there were no other way."

The result of this came out in his tones, though of course not in his words.

"Harriet?" he said, with a brotherly carelessness. "I have not seen her yet. I have just come back from California, where I have been living for the past three years. But perhaps you know?"

"Yes, I know," said Dorla, faintly.

"She is now at Lake Memphremagog," continued Felix, "and I am going to join her there in the course of a few days. You have not seen her lately?"

"No! we seem to have drifted apart. I suppose I am getting tiresome, with Missy and all my cares, and you know Harriet likes something fresh. And she is getting, too, a little strong-minded. I suppose you know about it."

"Strong-minded? No!" said Felix, with vexation. "She has taken good care not to let me see anything of it in her letters. Who are the people that she has about her now?"

"O, I could hardly tell you. A little Bohemian and artistic flavor, but rather more pronounced than we have been quite used to. Perfectly respectable, though, and I hope you will not mind the difference in certain little things. That is, they seem very little; sometimes I think they have more meaning than we are accustomed to believe, and have their effect to pull down what ought be kept up."

"Women," said Felix, with a scornful shrug, "are quite beyond my comprehension. Beginning with my sister Harriet."

"Yes?" said Dorla, this time very coldly.

At this moment the faithful Henry reappeared upon the scene.

"Mrs. Rothermel," he said, humbly, "I come from my aunt, who begs you will not expose yourself to the night air

any longer. Some lady has been telling her the nights upon the river here are very dangerously cold."

"Perhaps she is right," said Dorla, rising slowly. And with a cool good-night to Felix, moved away.

Felix, who had arisen in a speechless sort of maze, when she went away, stood gazing after her, with a bewildered feeling that the world had come down, and would have to be built up again from the foundation. "Mrs. Rothermel!" Then he was only a suitor, and a coldly-treated one at that. The sensation of relief was something startling. He turned, and drew a long breath, as he gazed down the moon-paved river. How he had misjudged her! How could he atone for the insulting coldness of his manner?

"If they should meet again," he assured himself, it would be necessary to show her that he felt more kindly, that he had overlooked the past. "Not that it was likely that they would ever be thrown together much more," he said, "though he should make the effort to have one interview at least. But it was pleasanter to be at peace with all; life was too short for feuds of any kind." It made very little difference to him, of course, whether she was married to this man or not; but it was pleasanter to find she had not thrown herself away. A person in whom you have once felt an interest, etc. An interest, indeed. He did not deserve to know she was not married. His monastic fury was expended; he forgot all about going to his state-room. He walked up and down the deck, till it was long past midnight, and till his fellow-voyagers were all asleep or silent.

The next morning, about half-past six o'clock, he went again upon the deck. Many people were already there, having an enthusiastic desire to see the first of the ancient town. The morning was perfect, the air a great deal colder than was at all comfortable, and the wind quite riotous. Bundled up in shawls and shielded by an angle of the cabin, sat Mrs. Bishop. Felix made his way to her, looking around for Dorla, but she was not there. Mrs. Bishop was not pre-

pared for his unexplained suavity, but she was very soon melted by it, being a soft-hearted old woman, easily reached by any one associated with the dear and well-remembered past. In a few moments they were talking of the old days and the many changes. Her voice failed when it came to that; she said a few words, huskily, about his mother. And Felix had to supply his mind with faint recollections of having heard of Mr. Bishop's death, some two or three years ago. How heartless it seemed to have forgotten it! Now that he was with her, he felt as if he ought to have been more impressed with it, when he heard it. But a paragraph in a rambling letter, about people three thousand miles away, whom one never expects to see again, cannot affect one very vitally.

"But there is much left to make life bearable," said his companion simply. "My friends are very kind."

"Mrs. Rothermel is often with you?" said Felix.

"Yes, we have spent our summers together for the past two years; and she comes to see me almost daily in the city. I do not know what I should have done without her. She is everything to me. And now that Henry lives with me, I have no right to call myself a lonely woman. Many are worse off than I. But it is a drear change."

Felix remembered the contented and united pair, and indeed he did feel sorry for her. But while he looked for words to say so, Dorla came upon the deck and glanced around for her. By the hand she led the little girl, with whom he had had so unfortunate an encounter on the deck, the night before. She came up to them with a warm smile for her old friend, and a cold one for her old lover. The child snatched herself away from the group when she saw Felix. Dorla, not understanding, tried to make her speak to him.

"Your daughter and I came in collision yesterday," he said. "I hope she has inherited her mother's forgiving disposition."

"*Has* her mother that sort of disposition," she said, as if she were not thinking. All Felix's overtures were unaccepted. Missy held herself behind her mother, and refused to speak to him. At last her mother had to interfere; she stooped down and whispered something which had not much effect.

"*Dear* Missy," she said again in a low voice, "give your hand to Mr. Varian."

And Missy gave it—the coldest, smallest hand, and for the shortest second. And such a look out of her light eyes!

"It shall never happen again, Missy; and I hope we shall be friends."

Missy did not echo the hope, and her mother took her on her lap to recompense her for having submitted to give her hand to Mr. Varian for the tenth part of a second. Rather a bad beginning! Felix brought some more chairs, and they made themselves comfortable in the shelter of the cabin.

"Oh, how beautiful!" said Dorla. "After all, the outline is just like the pictures in the geography; I should have known it for Quebec."

"Such striking features could not well be lost, even in a wood engraving."

"See! Missy," said her mother, "it is time you took an interest. This is the old city that I told you of, that has a wall around it, and great iron gates."

But Missy cast dark looks at Felix, and refused to take an interest.

"Missy," said Felix, with humble perseverance, "there, where you see that flag, is where they fought a great battle once, and where General Wolfe was killed."

"I am afraid she doesn't know much about General Wolfe," said Dorla, putting her arms around her, "being only six years old."

"I never had anything to do with children, and I do not

know how much they ought to know," returned Felix. "But I suppose six is rather a tender age for history."

"Rather," said Dorla, holding Missy very tight in her arms, and wrapping a shawl about her feet. And Felix felt himself snubbed by mother and by daughter.

"Well," said Mrs. Bishop, "I'm not too young for history; you may tell me, if you think it worth your while."

So Felix solaced himself with telling all he could remember of the points of interest in sight from the river, to which Dorla, who was privately taking Missy's part, listened, but did not make a comment. Presently Henry, who was now formally presented as Mr. Stanfield, came up to them, and Missy's face brightened. He held out his hand, and Missy slipped down from her mother's lap. She made him take her out to the very end of the deck, and even lift her up to look over the railing, and she showed no intention of returning to the group that she had left. Presently Dorla got up and walked over to where they stood, and then they walked up and down the deck, Dorla and Mr. Stanfield, the latter carrying Missy in his arms, with the shawl wrapped close about her feet. Felix, left in the enlivening society of Mrs. Bishop, thought that this desertion might be owing to motherly misgivings about the thickness of Missy's stockings, or it might be owing to a desire to repay him for his insolent coldness of the night before. Or, bitter reflection, it might be an inclination for the society of that middle-sized, middle-brained, black-bearded, unoffending young man. No, perish the thought! A want of taste was not among the shortcomings of Mrs. Rothermel. It would have been a pleasure to watch her, as she moved slowly up and down the deck, the wind sweeping her clothes about her limbs, and her hair into her eyes, if he had been a little more certain of why she went away. She was not talking much, but was looking wistfully, and with a look that was not all pleasure, at the glittering and beautiful old city on its steep, towards which they were drawing so fast. The air was so clear, the

"You *did* come," she said, as he took her hand.

"Why, of course," he answered. "What did you think that I was going to do?"

"Well, it seems like forever since Montreal," she said, "and I am tired to death of Quebec, and am so glad to see somebody that I know. These are some of our party," she added, remembering them. And turning to Dorla, who stood nearest, she said with great ease for a girl of seventeen, who had been so lately blushing, "Mrs. Rothermel, my friend Mr. Varian."

There was a little laugh, principally from Mrs. Bishop, for Dorla looked somewhat cold and haughty, though she had laughed a little too.

"Thank you, Mr. Varian and I have known each other a good while."

"Well," said Abby a little sharply, for no one fancies being laughed at, "shall I present him to Mrs. Bishop? Or has everybody known him a good while?"

"Everybody I think," said Mrs. Bishop, "so you'll be saved the trouble."

"I shouldn't have minded the trouble," returned Abby, not in the best humor. "But not to waste time over it, I think we'd better go, for I see two omnibuses are filled already, and you never will be able to get the rooms you want. Mamma has spoken for them. But speaking doesn't seem to do much good; there is such a hurly-burly. We've got a wretched little room."

Then Mrs. Bishop began to grow despondent, as was her wont, when any difficulty was suggested. She leaned heavily on Henry's arm, and told him they should be too late. Henry was very patient, but his thoughts were divided between getting her safely down the stairs, and seeing that Dorla and Missy, who were following, got down safely too. For Abby and Felix had gone on in advance, as had seemed natural.

"How long have you known Mrs. Rothermel?" asked



Abby of him. "Did you know her when she was young?"

That staggered Felix, but he reminded himself that he was talking to seventeen. "Yes," he answered, "when she was quite young."

"They say she was pretty," said Abby, picking her way among the cabbages and apples. "Was she?"

"Yes, very pretty as I remember her."

"I shouldn't think it," said Abby who had not got over being laughed at, "though she's very pleasant and nice. But here's the last omnibus, and we shall fill it up."

"If you will get in, I will go back and see if I can help them; they are still behind."

This did not please Abby, but she had to wait. Felix, however, might have saved her the pain and himself the trouble, for all the assistance that he rendered or the satisfaction that he got. Missy repulsed him violently, and Dorla declined his arm, and Marie was carrying all the bags and shawls. When they returned to the stage, they found that all Abby's representations could not keep it empty for them; five other persons were seating themselves at leisure. A deep gloom settled on Mrs. Bishop.

"This is a horrid crowd," cried Abby, springing out. "Mr. Varian, don't you want to walk? I know a short cut, up the Breakneck Stairs. We shall be there almost as soon as they."

Mrs. Bishop tried to remonstrate, but the vehicle was more comfortable without them, and they were out of sight before the driver got upon the box.

"One would think she had been in Quebec a year," said Mrs. Bishop.

"And had known Mr. Varian all her life," said Dorla.

When Felix and his companion reached the hotel, they found a tight-packed crowd in the little waiting-room, and anxious faces all around. Henry was patient as ever, but despairing. There was but one decent room to be had, and

that must of course be assigned to Mrs. Bishop. And to permit Dorla to go up to the fourth floor and lodge in a narrow and meanly furnished room, was a thought impossible to him.

"I would so much rather have apartments outside, if one could find such a thing," said Dorla, looking cheerless. "With Missy it would be so much better. And I dislike hotels so much."

"But that would be breaking up the party," said Abby, who clearly revelled in perplexities and small discomforts, when there was a prospect of amusement. "I don't see why you could not put up with a poor room just for once, and we could be all together."

"At any rate," said Henry, "we can get some breakfast; and after, we can devise some way to make you comfortable. Aunt Hester, must you go to your room first?"

Aunt Hester consented to waive that privilege, and they all went in to breakfast, where they sat around a small table in the centre of which bloomed a scarlet geranium in a trellised pot. They all seemed hungry and merry; that is, Felix and Abby and Mrs. Glover, who had joined them in the parlor, seemed hungry and merry, and Mrs. Bishop and Henry and Missy seemed hungry, and Dorla alone was neither. It was impossible to think of Henry as merry. He seemed full of care and solicitude for Dorla, and for Missy, who sat beside him. He sent the waiter for three beefsteaks before he found one suitable for her, and then he ate one of the rejected ones himself in the intervals between ordering things for her mother and his aunt. Missy certainly ought to have been sufficiently nourished. Felix watched Dorla cutting her food, sugaring her berries, buttering her toast, in entire forgetfulness of her own breakfast. Even Abby noticed it and exclaimed, as she saw a final slice of toast go off the mother's plate upon the child's,

"Look at Mrs. Pelican! Mr. Stanfield, you had better

order something for her breakfast that Missy *can't* eat. It will be her only chance."

"Please, Abby, remember that there was a time when even you could not take care of yourself," said Dorla.

"Not a very long time," said Mrs. Glover.

"No," said Abby, "I should have starved if it had been long."

"It is true," said her mother with a laugh, "that you were not much coddled. I believe the struggle was to prevent you from eating what wasn't intended for you. I never remember the time when you could not forage for yourself."

"Nobody cut up my beefsteak for me to that mince-like fineness. Perhaps it would have been better for me if they had. I should not have grown to be so awfully healthy, such a rank weed. Missy will never be like me."

The comparison between the splendid, well-grown girl, and the atom Missy, was too great to be enjoyed by Dorla. She turned away her head to give an order to the servant, but Felix saw her face grow crimson.

"Is this festive scene to be abandoned?" said Abby, when at last there was an end of eating and ordering things to eat.

"Abby calls everything 'festive,' from a parasol to a mountain view," said Mrs. Bishop, while Henry moved chairs out of her way, and got her fairly started on her passage to the door.

"Yes! Festive infant, come with me!" cried Abby, scarcely conquering a polka step as she caught Missy by the wrist and dashed irreverently before her elders. Missy was not pleased, and showed it by twisting her shoulders and holding back, and finally by slapping.

"Little vixen!" cried Abby dropping her. "If I had such a cross child, I'd leave her in the nursery."

Felix took this occasion to fall back to Dorla's side. "If you think you would like rooms outside, I am sure I could find them for you."

"Thank you. Mr. Stanfield said he was going out to try, as soon as breakfast was over."

Felix bowed. He did not propose to run a race with Mr. Stanfield. Certainly Dorla was not proving herself forgiving. They were scarcely in the parlor when the assiduous Henry was seen issuing forth on his quest—seen by Abby, who was leaning from the window, with the freedom of her age.

"Behold your slave!" she cried to Dorla, who stood in the next window. "Now we shall see him no more till he accomplishes your bidding."

"Or perishes in the attempt," said Felix.

"Or perishes in the attempt!" said Abby. "It is quite medieval."

"It is quite unusual," said Dorla quietly, "if you mean his good-nature and unselfishness."

"*That* I feel applies to me," said Abby, "because I teased Missy at the breakfast-table, and because I made Mr. Varian walk up with me from the boat."

"O no," returned Dorla. "*That* looked quite heroic."

"I assure you it was fun."

"I am beyond the age," said Mrs. Rothermel as if wearied with the subject.

"Well, Mr. Varian is not, and that is one comfort. I shall have some one to help me laugh; you and Mrs. Bishop and mamma of course can't enter into things, for you're always thinking of your health or your proprieties or Missy, and Mr. Stanfield hasn't a grain of humor in him. Mr. Varian, you won't let them be hard upon me,"

"No, Miss Abby, I'll be medieval—"

"O, please don't be *that*. But just don't let everybody forget that I am young enough to be permitted to enjoy myself."

"Surely, she is trying how disagreeable she can be," thought Dorla looking at her watch; and then sauntered about the room with Missy, while they talked together in one of the deep windows. Marie came and took

Missy up to Mrs. Bishop's room; but still the bags and shawls lay in a heap upon the parlor table. Mrs. Glover came in compassionately and talked to Dorla, left alone.

"You had better come to my room and rest," she said after a few minutes.

"I cannot rest till something is settled about the rooms," she answered. "And really, I never want to sit down in a hotel. I want to walk about and walk away the moment that there is a possibility."

"You are not a very good traveller, then," said the comfortable lady, who was always at home and happy wherever there was anything to afford her entertainment.

"Wretched," said Dorla, and she could hardly keep from crying, she was so unspeakably homesick and uncomfortable.

"Here he comes," cried Abby from the window. "And in such a hurry, I am sure he must have found a place."

In a moment he was in the room, quite radiant, if anything so mild could be called radiant.

"Well!" said Mrs. Glover, as if all the party were equally interested.

"I think I have found exactly what will suit you, Mrs. Rothermel," he said. "Only a stone's throw from here. And large airy rooms, and a house that seems very quiet and respectable."

"*However* did you hear of it?" cried Abby.

"I asked some shop-keepers," said Henry, briefly, looking upon it as an interruption. Indeed he always looked upon Abby as an interruption.

Dorla's face looked much brighter.

"Had you not better go with me now and look at them?" he said earnestly. "It is only a little way."

"O yes, by all means," said Dorla, taking up her parasol and eagerly moving towards the door.

"My dear!" said Mrs. Glover in a voice full of propriety, "hadn't I better go around with you? Excuse me for suggesting it."

"Yes, if you will," faltered Dorla, blushing an agonizing red. "Mr. Stanfield says it is not far."

"O, I don't mind," she answered briskly. "Abby, let me take your hat and gloves; mine are on the roof."

"So!" cried Abby, watching them as they went out. "Mamma is happy. She is doing three things that she likes best to do,—making herself guardian of the proprieties, looking at rooms, and watching a flirtation. I don't know what she sees in rooms; but she would go over a whole hotel and look at them, if she were only going to stay one night."

"Nor what she sees in such a tame flirtation," added Felix, looking at his watch.

"No, it doesn't amuse me in the least. But mamma is different. A very little of that sort of thing enlivens her."

"How long has it been going on?" asked Felix as he rose. Abby was afraid he would go away for all the morning, and with innocent frankness said, "O, don't go, and I'll tell you all about it."

So Felix stayed, and Abby made a long story out of what was truly a very short one. Mrs. Bishop's heart was set upon the match, and she had fastened herself upon Dorla, and arranged things so that they should always be thrown together.

"I don't believe the estimable Henry has much money," said Abby, (at second-hand surely, for she was too young to originate such suspicions.) "And you know Mrs. Rothermel has a great deal, they say."

"Has she?" said Felix. "Was her husband very rich?"

"I don't know. Yes, I suppose so; anyway, she is called a fortune, and people talk about her."

"Has she attracted many followers, or is the worthy Henry the only one in the field at present?"

"O, as to that, I don't suppose she has anybody else. Why, you know, at her age, of course it would not be natural."

"Not if she were *very* rich?" said Felix, with a smile.

Then Abby, seeing a movement of restlessness on his part, began to fear that he would yet escape, and hurried to change the subject, and to interest him in the matter of the Saguenay.

"Mamma thinks we had much better go to-morrow," said she, "and make our stay here on our return. It is no use waiting for the Collinsons; they would have telegraphed if they had been coming. But I am sorry; they would have been jollier than Mrs. Rothermel and Henry Stanfield."

At this moment Mrs. Glover came walking briskly in; she was stout and heavy but incredibly brisk always. Dorla and Mr. Stanfield followed her. She looked much pleased to find her daughter still so well engaged.

"We have found such an excellent place," she said. "I really wish we could all go there. But that is quite impossible," she added promptly, seeing Felix interested.

"Yes, it is just the thing I wanted," said Dorla, looking so relieved. "Now I'm willing to stay as long as anybody wants to in Quebec."

"You were very homesick, I could see," said Henry, looking as happy as before he had looked anxious.

"You were very kind about it," answered Dorla, suddenly remembering his part in the matter. "I suppose we should never have heard of it, if you had not taken so much trouble."

"A parlor and two bed-rooms," interrupted Mrs. Glover, "all so neat and old-fashioned, and a general air of respectability about the house."

"A parlor, how swell!" exclaimed Abby; "we shall come and spend our evenings with you."

"Well, you may, if you do not make a noise and wake up Missy. For my room opens from the parlor."

"I won't go anywhere that I can't make a noise," said Abby.

"I must go and tell Mrs. Bishop," said Dorla, "and Mr. Stanfield, will you have my luggage sent around?"

Away went Dorla with scarcely a nod to those she left behind, and away went Henry in another direction to see that her baggage was properly bestowed.

"Well, really," said Abby, "she takes it very coolly, going away from us. I think she actually is pleased, and she hasn't said good-bye."

"O, it is only a step. And it is quite as well. The child would be worrying all the time in the hotel. And there she will trouble no one," answered Mrs. Glover.

"What shall we do, now that we have disposed of Mrs. Rothermel?" said Abby with an anxious eye on Mr. Varian.

"Why you forget, in our care for Mrs. Rothermel, that we have not heard whether Mr. Varian has any room."

"They tell me there are several single rooms on the fifth floor. I am sure any of them will do for me."

"O," said Abby, "what a comfort, to hear any one say that. Not like Mrs. Rothermel, who must have a parlor and no end of comforts before she can make up her mind to stay a week."

"But I haven't a Missy or a Marie or any of those luxuries."

"Be thankful that you haven't, then."

While Felix asserted his gratitude for the freedom he enjoyed, the two who were the subjects of their criticism were being taken to Mount Carmel Street, under convoy of Henry and a porter. Missy was as well contented as her mother, but her satisfaction arose principally from the hope of getting rid of Mr. Felix Varian, who had walked over her.

Mount Carmel Street consists, apparently, of two steep blocks, cut off above by a gateway that encloses a garden, and at the lower by the street and railing that cut the Governor's Garden in two. The two narrow blocks are quietness itself, like all of Quebec; the houses are plain old brick buildings; the sidewalks are about the width of a cow-



path. Over the iron railing at the end you look 'down upon the tree tops in the garden below, and beyond you see across the river the glittering roofs of Point Levis. The Governor's Garden abuts on one of the two blocks, and on that side there are no houses. If this is all of Mount Carmel Street there is very little of it. But there was quite enough to charm Dorla, and make her willing to stay in it a great while.

When in the three rooms that were her own possession, she was quite full of pleasure. The trunks were soon unpacked ; a great chair wheeled up to the wide, deep window ; the table strewn with books, the little old slender champagne glasses, that the French servant brought them for the purpose, filled with flowers that Missy had heaped her apron with in the garden below. There was an old-fashioned mirror the length of the mantelpiece, long and narrow ; and a deep fireplace, with a grate adorned with brass. Indeed, wherever there could be brass about the room, there was brass, and it all shone like gold. There was a great deep sofa ; and great generous chairs, and acres of table room ; a table where you could have your work-basket and your lamp, and piles of books and papers and a writing desk, and your pressing boards and six glasses of ferns if you wanted them, and whence you need never go for want of room, whatever were your occupation. "Ruddy and strong and firm on its legs," a John Bull of a table, worth a dozen shakily fragile things all gilt and enamel and quiver. Dorla thought it all delightful. There was room enough in her bedroom for the trunks, and there was nothing to remind her that she was a stranger and a pilgrim, and could tarry but a night.

It was afternoon, and Missy, worn out with walks in the Governor's Garden and climbings up the narrow street, had fallen asleep on the wide sofa. Her mother had drawn up a chair to the side of the table, and was dreamily reading or seeming to read. The day was warm outside, and the light

was shaded to a cool dimness. A servant brought in Mr. Varian. Dorla started, and laid down her book.

"To what are you indebted for the honor, etc.?" began Felix; "I will tell you. Mrs. Glover and Mrs. Bishop want to go to the falls of Montmorenci this afternoon, and they hope you are ready to go with them."

Dorla had a sudden, wicked suspicion that she was to go with the elderlies, and that Abby was to be driven by Felix, and this she resented hotly. Not that she was not elderly, but Felix was much more so, and Abby had become intolerable in her youthfulness. "No," she said coldly, "I am afraid I cannot go with them. I am a little tired and want to rest."

Felix bowed. "Miss Abby said she was quite sure you would not go."

"Miss Abby is very wise, considering her tender years."

"Yes, very wise," said Felix—"and you cannot go?"

"No, I am very sorry; but it would be a bore to me, and I only want to rest. We have been travelling for two weeks. It is a luxury to have a room of one's own to rest in."

"You look very homelike here," said Felix, glancing around the room. "I don't wonder you want to stay. I hate a hotel. I always feel so restless in one."

"I should have thought you would have got used to them by this time."

"No," said Felix dreamily, "I never have got used to them, and have not even learned to fancy that I am contented with my way of life. But I go on in it, and very likely shall go on in it to the end."

There was a pause; it was impossible for either to doubt of what the other thought. Dorla thought she knew that Felix was thinking of the different life he would have led if that March day had a different ending, thinking of the prosiness and dullness of a life with her—he who was companionable to girls of seventeen. And Felix felt sure she was full of cold and slighting thoughts of the past, that they might

each despise but never could forget. Her voice had been always cold since her rejected kindness of the night before, but it was a shade colder when she came out from this reverie. She reverted to the drive and said, with the manner of one who does not want to keep a district telegraph boy an unnecessary length of time in waiting, "I am sure Mrs. Bishop will understand, for she knew that I was tired. I hope it has not detained them, sending in for me."

"No, I think not," answered Felix, determined not to be rebuffed. There was something in the shaded, cool room, that was much more attractive to him than the hot hotel parlor, with servants passing and repassing, and a few bored sojourners occupying the best sofas. Besides, it was rather a rare chance to see Mrs. Rothermel without interruption from her daughter or the aspirant for her hand, and he was self-willed enough to be resolved to make the most of it. So he did not take up his book, like a district telegraph youth, and make his exit, R. C., but he sat quite still and looked at Dorla, as he said,

"No, I think their going depended much on yours. But it is too warm to go for pleasure yet. I think Mr. Stanfield will strongly advise giving up the expedition."

Dorla was very angry with herself for coloring. She would gladly have met the insinuation with the coldness that she felt, but instead of doing so, she was reddening like a girl of seventeen, and was sitting before Felix with her eyes cast down and cheeks in a glow. He did not take his eyes off her, the insolent. And there was a kind of amused triumph in his voice when he spoke, as if he thought it most diverting that a person of her age should blush so, or have a suitor, or do anything that implied the existence of life and feeling. At least so Dorla looked upon it.

"And he is so busy preparing for the Saguenay tomorrow," he said, at last breaking the oppressive silence. "I heard Miss Abby tell him that Missy would need a new

doll, and various illustrated nursery books, to get her through the journey. And I interrupted a caucus over guide-books and Canadian literature."

"You will need it all," said Dorla, "if you have not read up recently. I was going to offer you my Parkman, and two or three stray books which I have picked up here."

"But you will need them yourself."

"No, I shall not," said Dorla, looking up full at him, "for I am not going up the Saguenay."

"Not going!" said Felix, with a blank expression; for he had not thought of such a possibility; and he had not prepared his mind for two days and a half of seventeen; caramels and story books might possibly pall upon his senses. "Surely you will change your mind."

"No, it is not possible. I do not want to go, to begin the matter, for I am tired and want to have a quiet time. And besides, it is no place for Missy. She is not strong enough to go about on such expeditions, and she would be unhappy all the time."

"Could you not leave her here?" asked Felix. "It would be for such a little time."

Dorla gave him a look which would have been contemptuous if she had not been well-bred. "No," she said very quietly. "It would be impossible. I never am separated from Missy." And the contemptuous glance, in all its cold repression, wandered to the sofa, and changed to a solicitous and loving one as it fell upon the figure of the child. Felix shrugged his shoulders.

"I confess my ignorance," he said, "both of the necessities of children, and of their attractions. I never realized a parent's cruel bondage before. Do all mothers and fathers endure this sort of thing?"

"What sort of thing?" she said, really almost tartly. "Giving up the bliss of—going up the Saguenay, for the health and comfort of a child? Yes. I imagine a good many are capable of even that tremendous sacrifice."

"Well," he answered, "I think it must be a wretched life, that's all."

"Yes?" And when she said "yes" interrogatively, it was a clash of silvery icicles, and was meant to put an end to further conversation on the subject. A sort of "Finis" in a frost work. But Felix was not in a mood to be put an end to in that fashion. He defied Dorla and her interrogatory yes-es, and boldly laughed and said:

"Most people who have children are depressed and dull, I know; but I always thought it was because they had grown old, and not because they were under such an iron rule."

"I suppose it must be both," retorted Dorla. "People who have nothing to live for, slide along glibly, and have a sort of perpetual and unmeaning youth."

"That is possible, if parental affection is the only development that is worth speaking of in the history of the heart."

"It certainly is the only one that produces any marked and lasting revolution."

At this moment Missy turned and threw herself into another not ungraceful attitude, and muttered a little in her sleep; which had the result of bringing Dorla quickly to her side, and dispersing the cloud upon her brow. Missy's cheek was flushed, and Dorla laid her hand quickly and lightly on it, with attentive touch, and then went across the room and brought a light embroidered blanket and threw it over her. Felix and his hateful speeches were quite forgotten in the satisfaction of feeling that soft moisture on the baby skin. Felix saw it and it almost put him in a passion.

At that moment, the servant brought up Mr. Stanfield's name. In the interval that elapsed before she could return with him, Dorla said, "Please do not say anything about my not going with the party to-morrow. I do not want any difference made, and it will be time enough to mention it to-night."

"I doubt whether that will soften the blow," said Felix with perverseness. "But of course I will respect your wishes."

Mr. Stanfield came in, truly enough, laden with a bundle that had the unmistakable outlines of a big doll—indeed, the feet were sticking out—and bearing also a number of colored nursery books. His face had an expression of anxious fervor. He had, as Abby said, no sense of humor, and was not suspicious. He did not look displeased at seeing Felix, (though probably he would rather not have found him there,) and but faintly surprised. He had not the least idea of being ashamed of his devotion, and his open honesty in the matter was a great trial to its object. While she approved of his singleness of purpose, and unquestionable sincerity, she was constantly embarrassed by their manifestation, and saw always the ludicrous side of the situations into which they led her. Still, this was perhaps in the end in his favor, for she felt so angry with herself for returning such loyalty with ridicule, that she was doubly kind to him on the next occasion of their meeting, and was being slowly drawn into a net-work of gratitude and penitence. His tenderness for Missy, and the child's great love for him, gave him of course a place that nothing else could have done. And when he entered the room, where Felix, cool and taunting, sat spectator, with the huge doll and its droll feet in one hand and the gaudy pictures in the other, she felt in a rage with him for making himself absurd, and yet in a moment was melted with shame at so rewarding his affectionate devotion to the child. It was felt to be a relief by both when Felix, a moment after his entrance, rose to go. Certainly he could do nothing else.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Rothermel," he said, "that you will positively refuse our drive."

"That is one thing that I came about," said Henry, putting down the doll with care. "They are waiting, and

seem to take it for granted that you mean to go. Miss Abby and Mrs. Bishop are already in the carriage."

Then Dorla felt ashamed of herself, when she found her suspicions were unjust, and that Abby was really going in the carriage, and not *tête-à-tête* with Felix. She also began to feel that it would have been very nice to go out to the Falls, but it was too late to entertain the proposition. So she could only reiterate her refusal and send first one and then the other away, respectively, exasperated and dejected.

The next morning at seven, Mrs. Glover and Abby and Felix were waiting on the steamer for the coming of Henry Stanfield. The defection of Dorla was made known to them late on the night before. Mrs. Bishop had at once given out, and poor Henry was rent with anxiety and disappointment. Having headed the party as it were, even to his single eye, the situation was perplexing.

"He will not come, you may be sure," said Abby, leaning over the rail and gazing into the crowd below. "And I am sure I hope he won't. We shall have to be comforting him all the time. It will be like taking a family in affliction for an airing. Our spirits will be extinguished, and he will not be revived."

Speculations were soon superseded by certainty; as the last whistle blew, the figure of Henry Stanfield was seen hurriedly making its way down across the wharf. "He has not any valise," cried Abby, clapping her hands. "Behold the President of the Widow's Society! He cannot leave his post."

It was even so. He hastily explained that the last few days of travel seemed to have told upon his aunt, and that she was really unfit to be left alone in a hotel, and that she could not make up her mind to go without Mrs. Rothermel. Altogether, he thought it was best for him to stay; it would be so uncomfortable for both of the ladies to be left without protection in a strange city. It was all very transparent—"thin," Abby was vile enough to call it. But the with-

drawal of the plank cut short the awkwardness of the situation, and their regrets were vaguely ended in a shout of all aboard. Henry regained the wharf with alacrity, and was seen hurrying away without a look behind.

"Glad to be quit of us," said Felix, with a sardonic laugh. And so the Saguenay party was cleft in twain: Abby, Mrs. Glover and Felix launched upon the waves, and Dorla, Henry and Mrs. Bishop anchored by Missy in the harbor of Quebec.

It was the third day after this unwept parting, that Felix, bathed and dressed and rested from his journey, sauntered out from the Hotel St. Louis. The afternoon was beautiful; the long shadows were lying across the market-place, and the soft air was freshened by the low sinking of the sun. He sauntered down past the Jesuit Barracks, not caring where he went. He had nearly an hour before dinner, and he had nothing better to do with it than to saunter up and down the precipitous old streets, and feast his eye upon the picturesque and venerable.

A little crowd was gathering in the square, and he idly drew towards it. The centre point was a tall Frenchman, with blonde beard and black eyes, who stood upon a sort of cart, and marshalled about him a flock of trained doves. He held up a white flag and called out in a not unmusical voice, "*à vous, Capitaine,*" and from the flock flew the Capitaine and perched upon it. Then he shook out another of another color, crying, "*à vous, Caporal,*" and the Caporal fluttered down upon it: and so on, till all the many colored flags were claimed by the gentle little army. The crowd never seemed to tire. Felix watched their faces with amusement. And after a few moments, his glance wandered to the sidewalk, where people, who had not energy to come nearer to the show, were gazing at it listlessly. Girls leaned out of the wide-open casement windows, men lounged about the doorways. Time is not gold in the City of Quebec. And upon some stone steps sat Dorla, making a very



pretty picture in her light summer clothes, holding Missy, entranced, beside her, and with Marie—cap and big parasol most prominent—standing just behind her. In an instant Felix made his way to them; for by some oversight Henry was not there. Dorla greeted him pleasantly, and Missy was too much enthralled by the Caporal and Capitaine to do more than twist herself away from him and fling her head against her mother's shoulder.

"You are safe back," said Dorla.

"Yes."

"And how are the rest of the party?"

"O, well, I think, only a little tired."

"You were enchanted with the scenery, I suppose? Everybody is."

"Yes, that is, I felt that I ought to be, but I was not. The fact is, there were noisy people on the boat. And I have confided to you many times that I don't like noisy people."

"I remember," said Dorla, with the sweetness of old days. "You would like to go up the Saguenay in a bark-canoe or in a special steamer."

But this was too pleasant to last; Missy began to pull her mother's head down with both her hands, and whisper something eagerly.

"You can't," said Dorla, a shade less gentle in tone than usual. "I cannot go in such a crowd with you. You can see very well from here."

But Missy was persistent and eager, and there was very little prospect of more conversation. At last Felix finding the drift of her whispered frettings from her mother's answers, offered to take her out into the neighborhood of the doves, and bring her safely back when her curiosity should be satisfied. Missy looked at him askance, when her mother said he was very kind and that she might go with him. She hated him as ever, but she longed with all her vehement little soul to see Caporal and Capitaine face to face, and to

hear exactly what the Frenchman said from under his blonde beard. She was so little, she went through life, at least had gone through it so far, under a disadvantage—people from their waists up were always in her way.

“And I will put you on my shoulder, Missy,” said Felix, suavely. “You will be higher than anybody in the crowd. And we will go quite near.”

This was more than she could resist; she would not consent in words, but she permitted herself to be lifted in his arms and carried towards the coveted position. Dorla looked quite happy as she waved her hand to them. Felix was doing his best to explain the pageant to her, and to amuse her and make the most of his time, and Dorla was watching them with an amused smile; when Henry Stanfield, drawn by envious fate, crossed the square, and Missy, following the downward swoop of one of the birds, caught sight of him.

She called his name in a shrill voice, and when he approached her, stretched out her arms and demanded to be taken. Felix, looking upon Mr. Stanfield's joining them as an impertinence, tried to ignore him and divert her. But Missy was not the sort of child one “diverts” with success. She made it evident with feet and hands, though she scorned to speak to him, that she meant to get away from him. In fact, she kicked him quite defiantly in the chest, before she succeeded in getting herself transferred to the arms of her slave.

“You will not be so high, Missy,” said Felix, with the double purpose of covering his wrath by speaking carelessly, and of annoying his rival by an allusion to his undersize. Missy's answer was to put her arms around her bearer's neck, and kiss him defiantly. Felix laughed, and went back to the sidewalk where Dorla sat. But he was flushed, and Dorla knew he was angry.

“I am so sorry,” she said, looking distressed. “Missy is so wilful.”

The gentleness of her tone soothed Felix, and he sat down

beside her, feeling that he had the best of it, and hoping Missy would insist on keeping her servant in the crowd for an hour at least.

"Yes, it is true, Mrs. Rothermel," he said, "I have been thrown over with contempt. In fact, I have been kicked into the bargain."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, coloring and looking infinitely distressed.

"I hope you will use your influence with your daughter to treat me with more leniency."

"I shall certainly punish her," said Dorla. "And I think you are very kind to bear it, and not be angry. She is very naughty."

"Well, if *you* will only be good, I'll agree not to think anything more about it."

This Felix said in a natural, boyish sort of way, taking off his straw hat and fanning himself, for carrying Missy through the crowd had made him warm, to say nothing of his rebuff. Dorla laughed, a little uneasily, and did not push the discussion any further. They talked a little, and watched the doves idly, with the rest of the people. Capitaine and Caporal performed their duties with diligence and vigilance. But bye and bye at a signal, the flock all flew away, up to the chimney-pots, and the ledges of the neighboring houses, and Missy's eyes grew amazed and disappointed, for she thought the end had come. Then the man blew a shrill whistle, and the obedient birds, fluttering from the ledges and roofs, swept down in a graceful circle against the blue sky, down above the heads of the gazing crowd, and settled around their master's hand.

Then Missy gave a shrill cry of delight, that made everybody turn and look at her. She saw the show was going endlessly on, and it was to be hoped Henry's arms were not tired, for she had no idea of going away at present. Felix with inward satisfaction saw him shift her from one shoulder to the other, and furtively wipe the perspiration off his

forehead. How comfortable and cool he felt, in the shadow of the old stone house! And how gentle Dorla was, and how beautiful she looked, in her pretty summer dress! They did not talk much: he occupied himself in making out the legend on a bracelet she wore on the arm that lay nearest him. She did not move for many minutes; and he read it quite perfectly. And then he thought of the day that he had looked at her hand as it lay outstretched on the table in the car. How strange, that he should be again beside her, with such strangely different feelings! Were they two the same beings who had gone through that storm of passion and temptation? It all seemed like a dream. But her hand was very beautiful, even though he might not feel ready to risk time and eternity for the touch of it, as he once had been. Bye and bye she stirred it, and beat a little idle tune with it, following the notes of a violin within. Then some one wanted to pass, and she had to rise.

"It is twenty minutes to six," she said; "I must go home to dinner."

"Must Missy go too?" he said rising. "She looks as if it would break her heart." Tender Felix! How much he cared about her heart.

"No," said Dorla, looking at her wistfully. "She has had her dinner. She can stay with Marie. Marie, be sure not to lose sight of Mr. Stanfield, and to bring Missy home as soon as she is willing to come away from here."

Then they moved slowly along the sidewalk, looking back at the patient Henry and the absorbed Missy, neither of whom saw them go.

"You're not afraid she may enlist?" said Felix.

"No," said Dorla.

"She doesn't look unlike it," continued Felix, "such a white mite, perched on Mr. Stanfield's shoulder. She might fly off at any minute."

"I'm reassured by thinking that she would not be likely to pass muster in a regiment of doves," returned her mother.

Then Felix laughed and said he must admit it, remembering the rancorous way in which she had pecked at him. They walked up the steep little street, and past the hotel.

"Dreary place!" cried Felix. "Five and seventy different smells from every window of the kitchen."

"But, hear this cheery little song. I always stop for it," said Dorla. From the window of the laundry came a gay, young voice, so full of energy and vigor, that it gave one fresh life to listen to it. Stooping down and looking in the basement window, they saw a be-soaped and hard-at-work young figure, bending and lifting itself again monotonously over a wash-tub, and trilling out this careless merriment.

"She knows me," said Dorla, giving her a nod, as they moved away. "I hear her every day. It makes me ashamed to think what a different song I should sing if I were shut up there."

"Probably you would not find the policemen and the hackmen as inspiring an audience as she does."

"Oh, don't say you think she sings for them to hear her."

"Mrs. Rothermel, I fear to tell you that I think she does."

"Well, I am sorry that I called your attention to her. I shall always believe she sings because she is light-hearted; but your hateful suggestion will always come into my mind to spoil my pleasure in her song."

"Then I am very sorry that I made it, I am sure. I am quite willing to modify it, and say she sings because she hasn't anything to worry about, *and* because the policemen are standing just outside."

Dorla felt sure she was meant to suffer from the allusion to worry, so she did not pursue the subject.

"May I come in?" said Felix, as they stood on the steps of the house in Mount Carmel Street. "It is still ten minutes to your dinner hour."

"Oh, yes," said Dorla, "and we are not rigid as to punctuality."

When Felix found himself in the great, easy chair by the open window, he could have wished dinner an hour off. Dorla sat down and began to change the paper between some ferns that she was pressing, taking off her hat and laying it beside her on the sofa.

"This we got on the way from Lorette, where we went yesterday to drive," she said. "It is a meagre little specimen; but I suppose you don't know anything about ferns."

"No," he said, "very little. I have never had a lesson since that picnic in the Conneshaugh."

Dorla felt his eyes upon her as she bent over the pressing board. "The drive to Lorette is very pretty," she said: "we went in the morning."

Then there was a silence, for Felix would not talk about Lorette. A silence, but a short one, for the door burst open, and in flashed Abby, who fell upon Mrs. Rothermel with kisses.

"I had six minutes before dinner, and I ran around here to tell you what a lovely time we've had." Then she gave a start and said, "you here!" when she caught sight of Felix.

"Yes," said Felix placidly; and the sight of him seemed to take away her exuberant enjoyment.

"I supposed you were resting, you talked so much about your terrible fatigue," she said, taking her arm off Dorla's waist and turning from them.

"I have been walking about an hour or more with Mrs. Rothermel; I found being in a civilized place rested me immediately."

Then Dorla felt sure he was playing her off to make his young victim jealous, and she began to freeze at once.

"We have not walked very much," she said, "and Mr. Varian has not exerted himself much in the matter of conversation; I think that he has rested."

"What is all this about?" thought Felix, puzzled and a little angry. For though he was very quick he could not

follow the delicate intricacies of Dorla's jealous distrust. It was certainly rather hard upon him; but the very sight of Abby's shining youthfulness, and the confident brusqueness of her manners, changed Dorla instantly into coldness and suspicion. It was impossible for him to do right, for Abby's presence in itself put him in the wrong. And Dorla, keenly alive to her own errors, knew very well that it was so, but felt sure she could not help it. "Now, I shall have no more peace," she sighed. "How I wish the girl would go away and leave me at least Quebec! I do not care whom she takes with her, I only do not want to see her and be put out of temper."

The ten minutes were soon up, and Abby rose to go, and Felix rose to go with her. Dorla saw them walk down the street together, Abby laughing in restored good humor, and she hated herself for the feelings that the sight engendered. After dinner, and after Missy's prayers were said (no inconsiderable matter), and she was fast asleep, Mrs. Glover and Mrs. Bishop came to interrupt Dorla's quiet twilight hour by the open window.

"I thought you might be lonely," said the first lady, who never permitted herself to be alone, "and I thought we had better run over to sit awhile with you. The young people are gone to walk on the terrace; and we will have a quiet time by ourselves."

The mother of a handsome young girl is willing to have a great many quiet times, and to be put very far back on a very high shelf; not unfrequently, she classes all women out of girlhood with herself, and that is not always pleasant. That Dorla was offended was certain, but Mrs. Glover, in the magnitude of her complacency, did not find it out. After Mrs. Bishop was comforted by an easy-chair and a footstool and the closing of a window, Mrs. Glover said, "Now, I'm sure you want to hear all about our journey."

"Yes," said Dorla sweetly, "all that I haven't heard from Mr. Varian and Abby."

"Oh, as to what you heard from them," cried Mrs. Glover, "I should not consider it very worthy of belief. They were in such a state, laughing at everything like a pair of children, and so engaged in their jokes and nonsense, that I do not believe they could tell a thing about the Saguenay without looking at the guide-books. You know what young people are."

"It must have made it very dull for you," said Dorla politely.

"O, you know we must get used to that," returned Mrs. Glover laughing. "It is the fate of mothers to be put quite aside. You will find that out when Missy comes upon the carpet."

"It will be happily some years yet," said Dorla.

"The years go by quick enough," answered Mrs. Glover, and she sighed a little. "It seems but yesterday since Abby was to be tucked up in her little crib at night, and there was an end of bother about her till to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Bishop laughed. "That's over, sure enough," she said, "and you may consider the bother has about begun. Abby is a handful. I don't believe you will have much peace till she has settled down into a married woman."

Mrs. Glover and Mrs. Bishop were old friends, and it was quite allowable to discuss the daughter in this way, provided always the faults mentioned were of an engaging nature.

"Abby is a good girl," said the mother, "but she is so full of spirits, it is really a hard matter to control her."

"What can you expect?" returned Mrs. Bishop. "You and Charles have always let her have her own way, and she is cleverer than you both, you know."

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Glover laughing.

"And she is so handsome, she will always find plenty of people to humor her, if you don't; so you had better make up your mind to letting her be captain. Nothing will be gained by disciplining her now; you ought to have done that years ago."



"Mrs. Rothermel, she is reading you a lesson over my shoulder."

"Yes? I did not take it so."

"O, no; I give my lessons to Dorla at first hand. She is spoiling Missy. She knows my opinion about that. But Missy is very different from Abby."

"In age," said Dorla coldly.

"Yes, of course in age, but in character, in—in circumstances. Now Abby, with such remarkably good looks, ought to have been trained with more than usual strictness. But dear me! What's the use of talking? I never knew a mother yet that had a particle of sense. Dorla, my dear, those tuberose are giving me a headache. Will you put them in the hall till I go away?"

When Dorla came back from expatriating the tuberose, she found them still on the same subject. Mrs. Glover could not possibly talk of anything else.

"She certainly seems to have made a good beginning," Mrs. Bishop said laughing. "Most girls would have opened the campaign with a college boy or two. But she has flown at the higher game at once. She couldn't have done better. Felix Varian is worth'an effort."

"O, Abby doesn't think of that. She is only taken with his good looks. She is too thoughtless, I'm sorry to say. If he had been a music teacher, it would have been the same."

"Then it's lucky he isn't a music teacher."

"Absurd, all this. You're talking as if it were a serious matter." (Mrs. Glover longed to be assured that it was a serious matter.)

"Well, as to that, of course no one can say as yet. But I must confess I think he seems to be unusually absorbed."

"Men of the world like Mr. Varian are apt to be taken with very young, fresh girls," said the mother modestly. "It isn't anything about Abby that is different from others, but she is so fresh and full of life. She really makes you forget that you've ever been bored or worried."

"Well, we'll see, we'll see," said Mrs. Bishop. "They might both do worse. Abby's a good girl at heart, and she's handsome enough to satisfy anybody. And Felix has got more money than he knows what to do with, and an old name, and a handsome face. And I suppose he is no better and no worse than most men of his age. Altogether, I should let things take their course if I were you."

"O, as to that," cried Mrs. Glover, with an honest little laugh, "I am very willing to let things take their course. I am not such a hypocrite as to say that I should not be pleased."

Then she began to be ashamed of herself, and a little frightened, perhaps, by Dorla's silence. So she hastened to exclaim, "But bah! What nonsense! When he, they I mean—may never have thought of such a thing. Mothers will be mothers. If a man looks at your girl, you begin to wonder whether he is to be your son-in-law. I began my speculations before Abby wore long dresses. I have no doubt, Mrs. Rothermel, you have had your apprehensions about Missy for a year or two."

"No," said Dorla calmly, "I do not remember any."

"O, don't take it seriously," exclaimed Mrs. Glover quite uneasy. "Really you know, we have only been joking about the whole matter. I hope—that is—I believe you haven't any dislike for Mr. Varian? I notice you do not talk very much with him. And I think he told me that he used to know you. It was rather awkward, forcing him upon the party so. But Abby is so impulsive. It was all done before I thought much about it, one way or the other."

"I am sure," returned Dorla, frightened in her turn, "it can't be anything but a pleasure to have Mr. Varian. He is so good a traveller and so entertaining. It is a good many years since I have seen him, but I never should feel as if he were a stranger, I knew his mother and his sister so well."

It was Mrs. Bishop's turn to be uneasy now. Somehow she did not like the feeling she detected in Dorla's voice.

She began to tremble for her beloved Henry. She felt it in her heart to hate Felix, who had come in to spoil the little family arrangement, upon which she had spent so much exertion. So she said, like a wily old diplomat :

"Why, no ; nobody can have any objection to Felix Varian. I never heard anything against him in my life, except, it may be, some angry speeches from girls he had flirted with ; one can't blame him for that. I truly hope he has got tired of flirting, and may make up his mind to be very much in love with Abby."

"That would certainly make him a very much pleasanter travelling companion," said Dorla, with a careless laugh. She was quite on the defence now, and began to take an active part in what was said. She was quite vivacious for the remainder of the evening. About ten o'clock the faithful Henry came to take the two ladies home. She was quite unkind to him, and the poor fellow went away with a wounded spirit.

"Where did you leave my daughter, pray ?" Dorla heard Mrs. Glover say as soon as they got out into the hall.

She did not hear the answer. She went back into the room, and shut and bolted the door, and opened wide the windows to the summer night. As little of her kind, and as much of air and stars and sky as she could get. She sat silent and absorbed, gazing out into the star-specked darkness, for an hour. Then Missy moaned and moved in an adjoining room, and the reverie was at an end.

Since Mrs. Glover had observed that she avoided Mr. Varian, and since Mrs. Bishop had so unnecessarily given it as a part of her experience that no one ever did avoid him, except those with whom he had once flirted, there was no course for her but to make it very apparent that she did not avoid him. At an early hour next morning, the humble and harassed Henry came to know if she would take a walk. They were all going to take a walk, even Mrs. Bishop. With alacrity, Dorla said that she would go, though she had

been secretly hurrying Missy's breakfast in the hope that she could get away before any "party" plans were forced upon her. At the corner they were met by the two old ladies; in the distance were Abby and Felix lounging at a shop door.

"This way," signalled Abby, and led the way. It was quite natural that she should choose the walk, and that they all should follow. Nobody objected but Dorla. She had to be silent, but every step after the gay, flaunting figure in advance, was a bitter penance to her. Mrs. Glover and Mrs. Bishop fell gossiping and mumbling to the rear. Henry, with Missy by the hand, followed Dorla, at her side when the exigencies of the march permitted, and the width of the sidewalk, but always very near. It was a cold, bright day, the wind keen, the sky cloudless and very brilliantly blue.

"I'm cold," said Missy shivering, and Henry stooped and tied his handkerchief around her throat, and Dorla looked anxiously to the buttons of her stout little walking jacket.

"Let us have a race, and that will warm you," said the unselfish guardian. So quite unconscious of the fact that he did not appear to advantage on a jog trot, he started off at this pace to match Missy's feeble run. Dorla felt herself crimsoning with vexation, when Felix and Abby turned and watched them. Finally the race ended by a return to "mamma," who was the stake or goal. It had had the effect of putting a little tinge of color on Missy's cheeks, but her retroussé nose was still blue with the cold.

"That will do," said Dorla ungraciously, stung by seeing that her darling was not beautiful, and that the man she wanted to like was making himself absurd.

"I thought it would do her good," said Henry apologetically.

"I have no doubt it has," returned Dorla, moving forward, "but I do not want her to be tired, and we may have to walk a long way; Miss Glover has not told us."

They were not within speech of the two leaders yet, who were nearly a square in front of them.

"It is thoughtless of Miss Abby," said Henry, seeking for some excuse for his sovereign's ungraciousness. "I will go and ask where they are going, and why they walk so fast."

"If you please not," exclaimed Dorla almost with impatience. Then Henry sighed, and walked after her humbly, and thought her more beautiful than ever. A great Canadian with red whiskers who passed them evidently thought so too, for he turned and looked after them with great simplicity. She had never given up wearing black; greys, lavenders, and pearl were the amelioration. This day she was all in black, black silk, velvet, embroidered cashmere and lace, all in graceful sweep about her, and her hat, with its velvet band and long black feather, gave her quite a regal air. Presently Abby and Felix paused and waited for them to come up.

"How slowly you walk," cried Abby, as they joined them. "Is it to be queenly, or do you like it?"

"It is not to tire Missy, I believe," said Dorla calmly, looking at her. Dorla was taller than Abby, and that annoyed Abby, who was used to being the tallest among her companions.

"I should think you would freeze, creeping so," she said.

"It *is* chilly," returned Dorla simply. All this time Felix had not spoken, but had been looking at her. Now he moved to her side.

"What are we going to see?" she said, not waiting for him to speak. "I hope we are not wasting our time."

"O no, this is to see a sight," he answered. "I supposed that you all knew you were doing your duty by history."

"This does not look like history," said Abby, going towards the door of a little old wooden house, with a window on each side of the door, and in the steep roof two dormer windows, that opened like casements. It was built between a house of stone and one of brick, both looking very high,

because it was so low; but neither of them modern, (as nothing is in Quebec.) In one of the windows of the little old house, was a small display of cakes and apples; across the other a curtain was drawn, as if private life and public were divided by the door.

"But may I ask," said Mrs. Rothermel, while Abby knocked, "what makes this old house of more interest than all the others?"

"O, *don't* you know?" cried Abby; "why, it's the house where Montgomery's body was laid out."

Then Dorla's face took a strange, wistful look, as she gazed at it, without speaking, while Henry and Abby in turn thumped upon the door.

Missy pulled her mother's dress, "What is it?"

"What is what?" said her mother, absently, still looking at the house as if she saw the forlorn procession of that December night filing through the narrow doorway, with its stark and silent hero borne feet foremost by worn and gloomy men from the "lost battle."

"What does she mean—what is it to be laid out?" fretted Missy, in awe of a mystery, and in anger at a want of attention.

Abby, who had stopped shaking the door, heard her shrill whisper, which was not meant to be heard but by her mother, and exclaimed with a little laugh, "To be laid out is to be a cold corpus, and to have no voice in the arrangement of your last grand toilet."

Dorla shuddered. The laying out of dead bodies suggested more to her than it did to the speaker, possibly. Missy whimpered and began to twitch at her mother's hand in a way that foreshadowed a scene. She was nervously afraid of everything connected with death, and wilfully opposed to having her questions made light of. So her mother, with patient care, began in a low voice to explain to her about the attack and its failure, and the death of General Montgomery.

"But what did they bring him here for?" persisted the child, morbidly bent on hearing details.

"To—to wash his wounds, and change his clothes, and make his poor body ready for the grave, Missy," said her mother in a low voice.

"What good would that do?" said Missy, beginning to cry, and kick. Her sensitiveness had this unpleasant manner of expressing itself. This new and terrible subject had overwhelmed her, and she was in a rage of nervous shame at being seen and laughed at. Henry, who hurried to her, was driven off with the announcement that she hated him. She even included her mother in this condemnation. Dorla sighed and attempted no pacification. It is needless to say she wished that they had stayed at home. The storm would perhaps soon spend itself; but her comfort was at an end. (Though, to be sure, she hadn't been too comfortable before.) It was impossible to attempt to explain or excuse the child to such an audience. She even saw, or thought she saw, a merry, meaning look of derision pass between Abby and Felix; whose attention however was happily diverted by the opening of the door by a small Irish boy. She kept Missy quietly by the hand till they reached the threshold; farther than that, Missy refused to go. Abby was in the advance. From the room where the curtain hung, came an old Irish woman in a cap. She proceeded to cross the room, and install herself behind a little counter; probably with the intention of being official. The intruders took but little notice of her, but gazed about the little, low, dark room, which they almost filled.

"And this," said Abby, glancing about her with a momentary thoughtfulness, "is where poor Montgomery was brought!"

"No," said the woman, with emphasis, "it isn't the room at all. It's another room entirely. And we've made up our minds," she went on, taking an attitude of great resolu-

tion, "we've made up our minds that the gentry must pay ten cents, if they want to see the room."

Abby burst into a laugh, and walked towards the door.

"Come," she said, "this is extortion."

"If it's worth seeing at all, it's worth ten cents," said the woman, angrily.

"I consider that we *have* seen it," returned Abby, going out, followed by all but Dorla. "There is no doubt in my mind that he was laid out in this very room. In fact, I don't believe there is any other room in the house. Good-bye."

And the young lady made her a very absurd salutation as she stepped into the street. Henry, engaged in the pacification of Missy, stood outside. Felix, on the threshold, awaited Mrs. Rothermel, who walked up to the little counter, and laying down some small Canadian coin, said, civilly,

"I am sorry we intruded. I am much obliged to you."

Then the tide set in the opposite direction. With profuse, Irish gratitude, she implored Dorla to stay and see the room. But Dorla had got enough of it; between Missy, Abby and the Irish woman, she felt as if her poor little bit of sentiment had been quite crushed out; and she stepped upon the pavement with a sensation of relief.

Abby was so diverted by the occurrence that she said a dozen tolerably good things, and laughed at them and made Felix laugh so much that the few passers-by turned to look at them in amazement. This time Dorla took the lead, for she had quite made up her mind that she was going home—Felix and Abby followed close behind. About half a square off, they met Mrs. Bishop and Mrs. Glover, who stopped them to hear particulars, and insisted upon going on.

"Why, yes, you can go in and see all Mrs. Rothermel's money's worth," said Abby. "I shouldn't wonder if it entitled you to spend the morning there, she was so lavish. Shall we come back for you about four o'clock?"

"Nonsense, Abby," said her mother, "you must come



back with us now ; it will serve you right for leaving us so far behind."

"Indeed I shall do no such thing. At this rate we shan't see anything to-day ; the morning is half gone already. We are going to the Ursulines now ; and you can come after us, or you can give up going to see the trumpery old place."

"We don't know the way to the Ursulines, and it will not take you five minutes to walk back."

"Five minutes ! You will be twenty minutes mooning about the old shanty, asking questions ; and we haven't got the time. Come, Mr. Varian."

Missy looked from one to the other in amazement, as Abby, putting her hand in Mr. Varian's arm, moved away with resolution.

"You're a self-willed girl," said her mother, forgetting diplomacy in anger as she turned to follow.

"I will go back with you. I don't care for the Ursulines to-day," said Dorla.

"No," returned Mrs. Glover, hardly grateful. "It is best not to break up the party."

"Henry, dear, you must give me your arm," sighed Mrs. Bishop, very tired and not much pleased with the little family scene.

At the corner, Dorla said, in dread of having the Chapel of the Ursulines desecrated by such associations, "I think I will leave you now, and take Missy home."

Thereupon Missy cried and insisted upon not being taken home. And the general clamor was too much for Dorla, who yielded and went on. Abby was by this time out of sight, around the corner of Parloir Street, down which they followed her. Before they had reached the entrance to the Convent, Felix met them, saying the Chapel door was opened by some visitors coming out, and they could enter at once.

"What is it particularly about the Ursulines' Chapel?" asked Mrs. Glover, who, in a sort of mother-in-law appropri-

ation, joined herself to Felix. She had got over her rage at Abby, and thought her a clever creature for getting her own way and making a conquest of Felix. Felix for his part was not actively attentive to Mrs. Glover; perhaps that gratified her, as being son-in-law-ish. She took his arm coming down the narrow street.

"The ridiculous old place," she said, as he had to walk in the middle of the street, or near it, to give her the benefit of the sidewalk.

"Well, what have we got to go to this chapel about?" she reiterated.

"Why, to see Miss Abby, who is waiting for us there."

"O, absurd, I don't mean that. But what is there to see, or hear about?"

"Well, there is to see, several passable pictures, and much curious old gilding and decoration."

"O, but I thought there was something remarkable—something historic, and all that."

"Well, if you put any historic value on poor defeated Montcalm's bones."

"O," cried Mrs. Glover all afire, "why, of course. I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

Then Missy, who always heard what was unprofitable for her to hear, was thrown into great agitation by the prospect of more mortuary details. Her little face was puckered into anxious distortion. As they entered the chapel door, a shiver ran through the hand her mother held. She had intense feeling for chapels and churches, and always came out of them so overstrained as to be detestable.

"Missy, you are tired; we had better go back." But Missy pushed her way into the door, and dragged at her mother's hand.

In the chapel they were met by Abby, accompanied by two young pupils of the pension. They had just bid adieu to some friends who had gone out the door, and were very glad of the presence of a few strangers to break the monotony of

their long vacation days. One was a pretty, red-cheeked English Canadian, the other a very plain young French girl. Each had about two yards of black lace like a veil or scarf over her head. One was a Protestant, the other a Catholic. Neither showed much reverence or devotional feeling, but both were well-behaved and modest. Abby fraternized with the English girl at once, and with eager curiosity drew her about from one spot to another. Henry, with Mrs. Bishop leaning heavily on his arm, walked business-like down the aisle, as if they were going to hail an omnibus, or put a letter in the Post Office. Mrs. Glover, who had seized the young French girl, was making discoveries and inquiries in a very naïve manner. She made many shrill exclamations of wonder, and went from one picture to another more rapidly than was consistent with much appreciation. Felix from some reason kept aloof from the rest, remaining near the entrance. Dorla sank into a seat, and holding Missy beside her pointed to the tablet in the wall, "*Honneur à Montcalm!*" and made her translate the sentence, hoping to divert her horror-struck attention from Abby. But this was in vain. History was little to Missy, and church was much. She was very simple and sincere in her own devotion, and Abby's conduct filled her with amazement.

"What is she going to do now?" she said in a shrill whisper, as Abby ran up the altar steps, followed by the Canadian at a little distance, who, with a mechanical and unmeaning reverence as she passed in front of the altar, answered her questions in a common conversational tone. "Is she wicked?" said Missy, coming to the point at once.

"I should not like you to do so, Missy."

"But is she wicked?" reiterated Missy.

That was an unpleasant habit of mind with Missy. She reached her point without circumlocution, and she insisted upon having it settled. Her mother was inclined to be vague from motives of charity and good-breeding, but this always enraged her.

"Is she wicked?" she cried, twitching her mother's hand, with her light eyes dilated, and her face white. Missy's faith was a very real one, and it was suffering a sharp trial at the moment.

"Let us go," said her mother, rising hastily.

"I won't," cried Missy, pulling away her hand. Thereupon Dorla secured the other hand, and half dragged her to the door.

"You are all of you wicked together," cried Missy, bursting into passionate tears, as her mother led her out into the street.

"I don't know any one more wicked than you, speaking to your mother in that way, and acting so in a church."

That sent her off into a rage of crying; it was a real stab to her unhappy little conscience, and Dorla was sorry she had said it when too late. Felix followed them.

"Can I go home with you?" he said. His presence seemed to add fuel to the flame. She showed herself a little vixen, pushing her mother away from her, stamping with her feet, and screaming with rage. Dorla tried to ignore it, leaving her standing in the middle of the street, and walking on quietly with Felix. Missy would have stayed there till Christmas. As they reached the corner of the street she said, turning back:

"I will leave you. Come to me at once."

"Not till he goes away," cried Missy, frantically. Then Dorla, with wretchedness in her face, said to him in a low voice, not looking at him for very shame:

"Please go away. I can manage her best alone."

Felix bit his lips, lifted his hat coldly and walked away, not going back to the chapel, nor giving a second glance towards the miserable child in her fury. "Friend Stanfield's joy will not be unalloyed," he said to himself derisively, as he joined a newly arrived friend on the steps of the St. Louis. As to Dorla, who can say how bitter that whole morning

had been. These contests with Missy were wearing enough when she was alone with her; now she had the sharp mortification of knowing that mother and child were both criticised and condemned. And not without justice. Dorla felt herself a failure. Surely Missy could not have been what she was, if there had not been some fault in her training. "Not one fault, but a thousand," cried poor Dorla in her self-accusation.

An hour later, Missy, forgiven, had sobbed herself to sleep, holding fast both her mother's hands. Her mother, with tear-stained face and eyes no prettier than eyes are apt to be after crying, sat motionless beside her for an hour, full of biting self-contempt. The unfortunate outburst had made the child almost ill. She awoke peevish and unstrung, and could not eat her dinner. That put the mother in a state of anxiety and restlessness. And so they managed to make themselves very miserable.

Some beautiful days followed this; on one of them, Missy in a calèche with Henry Stanfield, and Dorla, Mrs. Glover, Abby, and Felix in a barouche, went out at Palace Gate, with the Falls of Montmorenci as a destination. Mrs. Bishop was left at home.

"It was an anniversary or something," Abby said, and she didn't see why there need be anniversaries. Old women were tiresome enough without that. For her part, she meant to be jolly when she was an old woman. People lived twice as long if they were jolly.

"That might be a reason for not being jolly," Felix said, who occasionally became a little cynical (whenever he had a quarrel with Abby, Mrs. Glover had told Dorla).

"At any rate, they make themselves less of a nuisance to their neighbors. Whatever happens to me, I shall not shut myself up in my room every few days, because it is an anniversary, and cry over something in a locket."

"I am sure you will not," said Dorla, quietly.

"Nonsense, Abby," said Mrs. Glover, uneasily. "You

will be as broken-hearted as anybody when your time comes."

"I! Broken-hearted!" and Abby laughed a gay laugh; there was no past for her, no anniversaries and no regrets. She 'felt her life in every limb'; even Dorla, who did not love her, looked for a moment with admiration on the fresh and unstained beauty of her face. She saw Felix looking at her too. No wonder; she could almost excuse him.

The day was bright and cool; the sort of day that you drive in an open carriage with the top down. Dorla leaned back in her seat, with a parasol over her head, but more to keep off the eyes of Felix and Abby opposite, than the sun. It was four o'clock.

"This is neither entertaining, nor instructive," said Abby, who was perfectly happy, but ready to deny it. "We ought to know the objects of interest that we pass. Here is a great edifice on our right. Hasn't anybody a guide book, or doesn't anybody remember?"

"I don't," said Felix, "though I came here once before."

"Was it on the occasion of an anniversary?" said Abby. "For the recollection of it seems to make you very glum."

"No, I hadn't begun the anniversary business then."

"Mrs. Rothermel, do tell me, did you know Mr. Varian then? I've the greatest curiosity to know what there was about that journey to Canada. He was here, but he doesn't remember anything about it, and he never seems to want to talk about it."

"Abby! that's impertinent."

"Hush, mamma! tell me, Mrs. Rothermel."

"I don't know anything to tell you," said Dorla, faintly.

"Perhaps I didn't ask questions enough, nor buy guide books enough," said Felix, steadily. "Don't let us fall into the same error again. Let us ask Jehu what the building is."

The driver was an Irish boy of fourteen, who wore a black and white check coat and a low cap, and who talked

without turning his head. Nobody could understand a word he said.

"The stupidity of getting such a creature!" cried Abby, who seemed to think, as he spoke Irish, he could not understand English. "That was one of Mr. Stanfield's blunders."

"You didn't like the Frenchman he got yesterday," returned Dorla, with an instinct of defence.

"No; because he spoke such beastly French, and so fast no one could understand him. I suppose there *are* coachmen in Quebec who can make themselves understood in some modern language."

"Miss Abby," said Felix, who did not see the necessity of defending the absent in all cases. "I will engage your coachman to-morrow, and we will go with him in a calèche; you and I, and study every inch of the ground that we pass over."

Abby's face glowed with pleasure, but she tried not to betray it.

"That will be very nice," she said, "but it won't console me for not knowing what that great grim building is."

"Let us try him again. Stop a moment, Patrick. What did you say that building was?"

"It's a 'sylum," said Patrick, slacking up; (he drove very fast and his horses were white with foam.)

"What kind of an asylum?"

Patrick hunted for the word a moment, then gave it up. "For the people that's bad in their heads," he said, and then turned back to the horses and drove on more slowly.

Abby burst into a merry laugh. "The people that's bad in their heads!" she echoed. "I think there must be 'a many' of them to fill such a palatial residence. Look at that old woman *au troisième* waving her handkerchief to us. And see those two workmen on ladders, busy at the gratings. What fun to go in, if we had only time enough!"

Dorla's face grew pained, and she turned from the sight. There had been a few hours in her life when mental pain

and physical prostration had come upon her together ; and she had had a dim and faint perception of the tortures of a brain verging to its final wreck. The thought of

“Those cells where fettered spirits moan and pine,  
Where madness shakes its chain,”

took from her for the moment all joy in health and freedom, and made the brilliant sunshine misery. For Abby, healthy child, it was only another form of entertainment, a novelty that struck no exposed and sensitive remembrance.

If anything could wash out the recollection of such a drear abode, it would be the charming little French village into which they drove. The quaint houses stand with their faces turned away from the street, and trimness, and small thrift and humble content abide beside every threshold. Surely Beauport Asylum is not recruited from Beauport village.

“The prettiness of it!” cried Dorla, leaning forward.  
“There isn’t a house that I wouldn’t be glad to live in !”

“I confess that I should have a choice,” said Felix.

“There, for instance, that shop with the paper shades simulating lace doesn’t look inviting.”

“But I didn’t say anything about a shop.”

“It is all the same thing in Beauport.”

“And oh! the delight of that old two-wheeled cart !”

“Which is entirely new.”

“And the women sitting at the windows with their knitting. How quiet and afternoonish! Nobody looks tired, and everybody is clean. See, see that bit of coloring! Tell Patrick to drive slow.”

Patrick consented to drive slow, past a house which might have been built in Normandy. The casements were all wide open, and the passers-by could see into the barely furnished but cheerful room, where a tidy young woman in petticoat and short-gown moved about the great stove set in the wall. At the shaded doorstep sat an old woman in a white cap,



and at her feet played a child in a red dress, with round brown head and black eyes. A cat slept on the stone. The old woman's knitting needles moved monotonously.

"I think they are happy," said Dorla, drawing a long breath.

"Very likely," said Abby, who didn't see much in it. "But you wouldn't be, if Missy were sitting on the grass, like that scrap."

"It would not hurt her, if she had always lived in Beauport," returned Dorla, coloring a little. Then they came to a larger old stone house, standing back from the road, on a sort of elevation. It had an *affiche* in the window, "*Maison à louer*," but it had evidently been there through storm and shine, a good deal of each.

"There is your opportunity," said Felix.

"*Mayn't* we go in and see it?" said Dorla, as if she expected to be refused."

"I am sure we may," said Felix, as if she were not to be refused anything, and stopped the little Irishman.

"Nonsense," said Abby, who wasn't pleased. "What is there to be seen? It is just like all the other old steep-roofed things."

And when Felix opened the carriage-door, she refused to follow Dorla out. Mrs. Glover, who felt a little indolent, and showed no interest in unconventional houses, declined to follow. So Felix and Dorla made their way alone through the unused gate, and across the high grass to the house. There were some briars in the grass, and Dorla had to struggle through them, once or twice with the help of Felix's hand.

"Beauport folk evidently do not add to their private thrift the virtue of keeping their neighbor's unoccupied grounds in order."

"Who would?" said Dorla. "But the bliss of these deep windows. I think I should be happy if I lived in a house with window-seats, and walls four feet thick."

"Let us go and see the view from the rear," he said.

And they made their way to the back of the house, where the tangle of vines and briars was greater. Dorla sat down on the wide stone door-step; there was an overgrown and wild garden, and then a sketch of fields, and beyond the blue St. Lawrence. The sky was so clear and deep in color, the air so pure and transparent, and the sunshine so still and golden, that neither felt willing to leave the silent spot. They started some birds from among the vines, who twittered and then flew out of sight.

"What bliss to live here!" said Dorla, gazing wistfully at the calm fields and the river.

"Do you think you should be happy?" asked her companion.

"I don't know whether I should be happy anywhere," she said, trying to keep back a sudden rush of tears; she had been fighting for so many days with the sense of failure, it was hard to answer this question. "French peasants and a two-wheeled cart would do a good deal though," she went on desperately, with an attempted laugh.

Felix would not follow her. "I could fancy a life here that would be bliss," he said.

"It is so easy to fancy, and so hard to realize," she answered, getting up quickly. "I don't believe in bliss."

"No, only in monotony and mediocrity, and a life of duty."

"Yes, I suppose so," she said, stepping down into the grass with a sudden confusing recollection of Abby and the present. They were standing in the shadow of the house; far beyond it on the grass, lay long, slanting shadows of all trees.

She moved toward the sunshine that lay beyond the old grey-stone corner of the house.

"Mrs. Rothermel," said Felix, in a tone that arrested her, and he did not move. She involuntarily stood still, half-  
ned towards him. "Mrs. Rothermel, I want to ask you

something. Are you going to marry Henry Stanfield? For I think it would be such a pity for a woman to marry twice from a sense of duty."

The suddenness of this and its audacity, had the effect of stunning her for an instant. And there was something in the tone, derisive above and deep below, that shook her very heart. What was it? where did they stand? It was all a dream; and yet there was Felix not two feet from her, with a calm, indifferent face, and blue eyes that had only scrutiny in them. It was only the tone that stirred her. The words were too daring and unpardonable to awaken anything but anger. At that moment Abby's high-pitched voice calling them from the gate, made them both start.

"You have not answered me," he said, following her. "Are you going to marry him?"

"I may, perhaps," she said, steadily in a low tone, as he walked beside her.

"Well," he said, in a voice that stung, "I have delivered my soul. I have told you that I thought it was a pity. And now I suppose I had much better let the subject alone in future."

"Very much better," she said, hardly audible. And so they walked in silence to the carriage. Her hand shook so, she would not touch that of Felix as she got into the carriage. Mrs. Glover and Abby were not blind. Here was a pretty sight. Dorla with burning cheeks, looking as if she had been crying, and Felix white as ashes. For a few moments after they drove on, no one attempted to speak. It was an absurd quartette. Gradually, Mrs. Glover being only angry and chagrined, began to find her voice. Then Felix, though it was like somebody talking in a play, and then Abby, with a keen rush of sarcastic levity. Only poor Dorla could not speak. Poor Dorla, it was as if some one had struck her in the face. If she had been obliged to speak, she surely would have broken down. It was certainly rather poor spirited in a man to speak cruelly and in-

sultingly to a woman like that, one whose anger was quenched at once in a flood of tears. Insult, to her, only called out the self-accusation that always abode with her.

"It is my fault. I deserved it. He never would have spoken so to any other woman. He cannot respect me, and I cannot blame him."

The rest of the drive was a sort of dream to her; she saw nothing by the road-side, and only heard the voices of her companions with bewilderment. They all seemed to know their parts, to overact them even; and she alone could not tell what or where she stood. She only longed to get away from them, to hold Missy by the hand, and to reassure herself of the life to which she really belonged. She was no match for the child Abby, in her jealousy and suspicion strong and passionate as a woman. The contest was just beginning. It had taken Abby a long time to believe it possible, that one so unlikely as Dorla could be her rival. And her mother had never been convinced of it till now. After this there could not be a doubt. They were, in their way, as angry and revengeful as if she had been plotting against them.

A good deal of this Felix saw, and acted like a demon. He tried to torment Dorla, with the same words that would soothe Abby. He was in such a rage with her, for presuming to like two men better than she liked him, that it gave him a sort of satisfaction to see that she was suffering. He gloried in having spoken insultingly to her, though the impulse to do it had been so sudden, he could not explain it. His anger had been kindled by her defence of Henry Stanfield, at the beginning of the drive, and had been suddenly revived by her trifling tone, when he had chosen to be sentimental.

At last the drive came to an end; the reeking horses drew up before the little inn. Dorla sprang out of the carriage without waiting for him, and hurried to meet Henry and Missy, who ran across the street to her. Missy grasped

her hand, and she took the arm of Henry, and vanished from sight into the woods that border the enclosure round the Falls. That was a pleasing sight to Mrs. Glover, who made the most of it. To Abby, who watched the face of Felix, not half as pleasing. She was in no hurry to follow them, though Felix was, alas! He was very absent-minded, and forgot to be devoted as he had been when Dorla was their vis-à-vis. After many delays, they passed through the battalion of little beggars at the entrance, selecting one as guide, and going along, grimly enough for a party of pleasure. It is a bad sign when pleasure-seekers begin to look at watches.

"We shall have a late dinner," said Felix, taking his out of his pocket. "It is past five, and we have no chance of getting off on our return, for half an hour, at least."

"Are you hungry?" said Abby, spitefully.

"There is no law against looking at one's watch," said Mrs. Glover, trying to make peace.

"O, let us hurry," cried Abby, tauntingly. "It will not take many minutes to glance at the Falls. Anything rather than interfere with dinner."

"The horses have got to rest," said Felix nonchalantly. "Shall we go through this wood-path? I believe there is rather a pretty ramble."

Abby, divining that the object of going there was to meet the others who had disappeared so suddenly, wisely declined to do anything but go to the Falls by the route the most direct. The grass was slippery and dry, and the path well worn. The little French guide was rather unnecessary.

"If you are willing," said Felix, "I will pay you and let you go back. For I feel that we are trespassing on your time unjustifiably."

The boy laughed a little, though it is probable he did not understand, and took his money, and made rapidly off on his bare feet. At one point, through the woods, they caught a beautiful view of the Falls.

"There, we have seen it," said Abby. "Now we can go back."

"No," said Felix, drearily, "there is more we have to see. You go down steps or something opposite the Fall, if I remember right."

"Is one permitted to be tired and hungry?" said Abby. "For I am *that*."

"It is only a few yards further. Ah! here are our companions."

"Why, no, I don't think they're exactly our companions. They are each other's companions," said Abby, with malice.

"They will be our companions, then, when we join them," said Felix, walking determinedly up to them. Abby and her mother could not do anything but follow. Mrs. Glover began to talk a good deal, no one cared much about what. Dorla had regained some composure, and could answer her sufficiently. While they were talking together in this way, standing on the bank of the ravine, no one thought of Missy for a few moments.

"Where is Missy?" suddenly cried Henry, in the midst of one of Mrs. Glover's involved sentences. Dorla gave a start, and looked around. Every one was startled not to see her; it was not just the place to lose sight of a child of six. The precipice beside the path was very abrupt, and so it had been for some distance, though no one had noticed it with interest.

"She has gone back into the woods for some anemones; I am sure she has gone there," cried Dorla, flying back in the direction of the woods. Henry shook his head and hurried away towards an opposite point. Abby, with a wrathful protest, went one way, her mother another. Felix followed Dorla. It smote his heart to see her terror, and her effort to conceal it.

"I do not see her," she said, her teeth chattering. "Call for her." Poor thing! she could not call herself. They cried up and down the paths, asked two or three persons

whom they met if she had been seen; called, but no miserable little Missy.

"Do not be frightened," said Felix. "There are a hundred places where she may be innocently at play. We shall find her, in a few minutes, some of us. Really, you are unnecessarily frightened."

Dorla had been flying along the paths of the shaded little civilized forest, at a pace at which even he could not have long continued. Now she began to tremble and grow white.

"If the others had found her wouldn't they call out?" she tried to say.

"Yes," answered Felix, "but maybe we could not hear them. It is better to go back. I don't think we shall find she is in this wood." He enlisted the services of two obliging English gentlemen, to beat up the wood, and then came back to Dorla, who shook all over, but refused to rest. Then he told her to take his arm, which she humbly did, and walked on as well as she could, back to the spot where they had been when they missed the child. Mrs. Glover and Abby were standing there, and they shook their heads with anxious looks.

"Those steps, those horrible steps," she said in a moment. "I know she has gone down them." The steps were very steep and dizzy things, which had made Dorla shudder when she looked at them; rickety too, and uncertain with age. The first flight looks interminable seen from above; then the little platform with a roof, and then another flight sheer down, among the rocks and debris at the bottom of the ravine—at least, so it had looked to Dorla, who was never strong of nerve. Inspired with this new certainty, she drew Felix to the edge of the bank, which commanded a view of the descent.

At the moment that Felix was saying, "No, you see she is not there," there was a flutter of a bit of white, far down almost at the bottom, and there was Missy, toiling painfully

up, with her arms full of weeds and flowers. Dorla gave a scream and sprang forward.

The child, unconscious of their eyes, was climbing up the steep ascent only careful of her leaves and flowers, not even taking hold of the railing, and making little childish irregular steps; but even with this, it seemed to those who looked, the frail fabric shook and rocked. One misstep: Ah!

At the same moment that they had seen her, Henry from the top of the steps had seen her too. Dorla saw him dart forward, and go quickly down the stair; and her heart stood still as she watched him. If Missy caught sight of him suddenly, she might be startled and lose her footing. At the platform they saw him pause, and call her softly. Dorla grasped Felix's arm to steady herself, and watched breathlessly.

"Ah!" cried Felix aloud, with a tone of some relief as the child looked up and moved towards him without affright or unsteadiness. Henry must have told her to take the railing, for she dropped some of her flowers and grasped the baluster. But she looked such a mite; she could hardly reach it; and she climbed on child-fashion, bringing both feet on each step, and taking a fresh start each time. Henry came down quickly and steadily to meet her; she toiled on with occasional pauses. At last, as they met and he lifted her in his arms, Dorla's nerves gave way, and she began to cry.

"Really," said Abby, sharply, "I shouldn't think there was anything to cry about now." The offence was, Felix seemed so sorry for her. Mrs. Glover had more feeling, and went up to her and talked kindly. But kind talk came upon unheeding ears. She cried with her face hidden in her hands, and heard and answered no one, till Missy's shrill voice sounded in her ears. Henry came hurrying up the path, with the child in his arms, who leaned forward to her mother. Dorla stretched out her arms and caught her, and turned away from them all as if she hated them, and kissed her and cried still. Missy, frightened and subdued by this



unusual violence, was quite silent. If Henry looked for any thanks, he did not get them. Indeed he seemed quite satisfied to be forgotten since he had seen her happy.

"Well, may we go now?" said Abby, with a contemptuous gesture of the hand to the others, as if to say she had seen quite enough.

"I think we are all ready," said Felix, coldly. And Mrs. Glover and Abby moved away with him.

Henry stayed behind with Dorla and Missy.

Ten minutes later, these three came across the road to the little inn. Dorla had a veil very tight across her face, and was quitted one with crying. Missy, like a dutiful little daughter, was looking up at her and being very silent. The carriage and the calèche were standing before the door; in the former sat the two ladies with ill-disguised impatience. Felix stood with the carriage door open.

"I think you must have forgotten we were going back to Quebec, to-night," said Abby, tartly.

"I? O, I am sorry you waited for me. I am going back in the calèche," returned Dorla, walking towards that vehicle, as if it were amazing that they had not known where she had made up her mind to drive. She did not attempt any apology, nor in fact look again towards them.

Felix stepped quickly into the carriage, and pulled the door to sharply, and they drove on. Looking back, however, from where he sat, he could see Henry putting her into the calèche with tenderness and care, and could see him take his place beside her, with the mite Missy on his lap.

"I really think it would have been more civil to have made some apology," said Mrs. Glover, much out of humor.

"I suppose it is to reward the faithful Henry for his feat of gallantry," returned Abby.

"You shall have sprats  
For your humanity,  
My seven fine cats,  
Said Dame Wiggins of Lee."

"I do not see the prowess, though, in walking down a flight of steps that every tourist walks down every time he comes to Montmorenci."

"No, you do not see it, because he is not your Henry."

"But it is quite impossible to say what it may result in," said Mrs. Glover. "With these deadly sentimental women, such things are often made the turning-point."

Felix had not much reverence for Mrs. Glover's judgment ordinarily, but on this occasion he felt that she had spoken sooth. It was quite impossible to know what estimate Dorla was going to put upon the walk of Henry down the steps; but it was not possible to doubt that it would be an exaggerated one.

"I do like common sense," said Mrs. Glover, leaning back in the carriage, as they rolled over the white road through Beauport village. Abby was eminent for common sense, or rather for the absence of sentiment, and Mrs. Glover hoped that that quality would strike Felix favorably after having been put through a scene. She knew men hated scenes; and Dorla had made such a fool of herself. "The future of that child Missy really weighs upon me," she went on, as no one responded to her praise of common sense.

"I think her present is enough of a nuisance without troubling one's self about her future," said Abby.

"Don't you think," said Mrs. Glover, addressing herself to Felix, "that a child so situated is certain of an unhappy womanhood?"

"I know so little about children, I am sure I cannot judge," Felix answered, non-committal.

"But think," said Mrs. Glover, meditatively, "of such a temperament remaining so ungoverned. Think of the mother's foolish fondness, of her foolish apprehensions, and her emotional tendency. I really don't know what will happen to the child, if she finds herself in a different position some day. If her mother marries Henry Stanfield—"

"I am sure he wouldn't hurt a mosquito," cried Abby.

"But if there are ever other children," persisted Mrs. Glover.

"Then undoubtedly, Missy will be let alone a little more," said Felix in an irritated tone, and as if he had heard more than he wanted of the matter.

Mrs. Glover found herself snubbed, and not being a practised diplomat, subsided into silence and brooded over her wounds. She had yet to learn that the walks of diplomacy require complete self-abnegation. People must not brood over their wounds, if they want to gain their point in any matter.

The summer twilight was gathering faintly; the green fields and the quaint Norman houses lay quiet by the roadside; men sat in the doorways now, smoking after the labors of the day; now and then, a little black-eyed child ran forward and held up a bouquet to the silent carriage, as it rolled by. No one noticed the little offerings. Abby waved the first away contemptuously, and after that showed her contempt by not looking towards the offerers. The prevalence of ill-humor was apparent even to the little Irish driver, who looked around occasionally, in wonder where were the gibes, the jests that had made the outward voyage so noisy. As they passed over the Bridge they came up with a party of acquaintances from the hotel.

"What makes you all so quiet?" cried one.

"I hope you haven't quarrelled," said another.

"Those people are insufferable in their familiarity," said Abby, drawing farther back into the carriage, though she had played whist with them for hours the night before.

When at last they drew up before the door of the hotel, she said, "thank Heaven," with irreverent ill-temper between her teeth, and sprung out spurning the offered hand of Felix. This was the second time that afternoon that Felix had had that experience; and Mrs. Glover took his hand as if she would not have done it if it could have been avoided,

her. Mrs. Glover's hopes revived, and Mrs. Bishop seemed perfectly well satisfied with the progress of events. Dorla refused to go out with them at all that day, and Felix only saw her once, on her knees in the Seminary Chapel, whither he had strayed in the unannounced hope of finding silence, and a half hour to himself. She had been crying, he saw, when she passed out of the door; he took pains that she should not see him. The next day he encountered her in Fabrique Street, but she had Missy, Marie, and Henry with her, and that was reason enough for passing with a bow. There was time enough for him to see, however, that she flushed painfully. And so the next day passed.

Henry was becoming insufferable. Not from airs of success; blessed soul, that was not his way of sinning; but from unspeakable in-love-ness. He was so absent-minded, so engrossed in his own thoughts, that at the table, Abby never addressed him without making several loud raps with the handle of her knife or fork to ensure his attention, before beginning her observation. This always had the effect of making Felix furious, and of giving Mrs. Bishop's nerves a great shock, and of irritating even Mrs. Glover. Only Henry was entirely unmoved, and seemed to forget she had ever done it before. But nothing interfered with the practice, as Abby was in the habit of riding rough-shod over the prejudices of her associates. Felix sometimes said to himself, he would alter his dinner hour and let them have the round table and the scarlet geranium to themselves; but he never had the resolution to break away from them. It began to be quite apparent, however, that he had little to gain from their connection with Dorla. Of course he dared not go to Mt. Carmel Street, and she had completely withdrawn herself from them, when there was any danger of encountering him. Henry and Mrs. Bishop were with her incessantly, it seemed to him, from the talk at the table; Mrs. Glover and Abby occasionally, though with much distaste. Still it

was "amusing" enough to keep him in Quebec, these little chances and glimpses.

On the fourth morning, however, after the drive to the Falls, Felix came down early, after rather a hot and sleepless night. It was an hour before the breakfast time observed by the party, and while walking up and down the reading room, and debating in his own mind the wisdom of getting through with that meal in peace and taking the morning to himself, he caught sight of a well-known figure, crossing the dark hall, from the reception room, through trunks and porters and news-stands. Dorla moved with the hesitation and discomfort of a young woman, unaccustomed to take care of herself in such places. She told a porter to bring a clerk to her, and then she grew frightened and told the porter to bring her to a clerk. All were very busy, as a train or boat was just arriving, and no one paid much heed to her as she stood beside the desk among a dozen dusty, hurrying, and ill-humored travellers. Felix threw aside the newspaper he had taken up, and went out to her.

"Can I do anything for you, Mrs. Rothermel?" he said, speaking in his ordinary tone; but when she turned her face to him, he saw there was something the matter.

"O, yes," she said, "I want a doctor—Missy is very ill. I am trying to get them to send a servant up to Mr. Stanfield."

Felix said, "Come back to the reception room. I will send up."

She followed him, and while he called a servant to him, she exclaimed:

"Oh, it will be so long! He may not yet be up."

"What do you want him for?" asked Felix abruptly.

"To get the doctor for me."

"Well, I suppose I can do that as well."

"Oh, if you only would."

Then Felix dismissed the servant, and getting from the office the address of the only homœopath in the city, sprang

into a calèche, and departed on his mission, Dorla being already on her way back to Missy's bedside, without so much as a look at him.

The doctor lived outside the gate; it was a long drive, and the end of it was not reached when his house was found. Felix hunted him out of the abode of a desperately sick man at some distance, and bore him back with him in the calèche. He bribed the Frenchman to drive furiously. When they rattled up to the door in Mount Carmel Street, the maid opened it as if she had been watching for them, and said: "Would Mr. Varian please go up to the parlor and speak to Mrs. Rothermel a moment?"

Felix went up after the doctor. Dorla met them with an anxious face, forgot Felix's existence, and took the doctor into the adjoining room. Felix walked about the room, not ill pleased to be there. It was in a sort of confusion, betokening sudden illness. One of Missy's sacks lay on a chair, and one of her tiny, tiny shoes. A bowl of gruel and some lemons and some ice stood on the table where flowers and ferns had been wont to stand. The pillow of the sofa was crushed down, and a shawl lay on the cushion as if some one had lain there to snatch a moment's rest, and half under the pillow was a little, well-worn book of prayer, with D. R. stamped upon the cover. The windows were open, for the day was warm. Marie crept out of the bedchamber, with a torpid face. It was very little to her that Missy was in a tearing fever; but much, that breakfast time was passing unobserved. She cast a stealthy glance at Felix, wondering how he came there, and mechanically began to pick up the stray sack and shoe, and put the room in order. Felix thought her an oyster for intelligence and sympathy, and wondered vaguely how Dorla ever could have taken her into her service. He did not feel any surprise that Marie did not love Missy, but that Marie should be endured, lacking that affection. Perhaps maids that love Missies do not grow on every bush, however. That was a new thought. In all the

world, one person loved the little, fever-stricken creature in the other room. It was a love worth all the rest, perhaps; but still it was but one. He wondered how it felt to love a child like that. It was strong, that mother passion. But all women do not love their children so. All the world fell away out of Dorla's sight and thought, if a shadow fell on Missy.

At that moment she came out of the room with a slip of paper in her hand. She looked from Felix to Marie as if uncertain which would do her errand best. She decided upon Felix and went up to him, and giving him the paper, without preface, said, "Get this for me just as quickly as you can, please. Poirier, St. John's Street, near the Gate."

"I remember the shop," said Felix.

And she disappeared into the room while he went out the door. When he came back from the druggist's, he found the doctor in the parlor sitting quietly, with his watch in his hand. This person also treated him as errand-boy, and said, "Just sit down and wait a minute, I may want you to go out again;" and went into the bedroom.

After a time he came out again, and took up his hat. "I will come back in an hour," he said; "I haven't had my breakfast."

"How do you find the child?" said Felix, wondering what relation the doctor thought he was to the little patient. The doctor said the child looked ill; it might be scarlet fever, it might be half a dozen things. She had a very bad pulse, but he did not know what her pulse generally ran. It was difficult to judge. A few hours would decide the matter. He would watch her closely, and then, hungry and cool, the doctor went his way.

To do Felix justice, he had not once thought of his breakfast. He was very well contented to sit in the shaded, cool, and now tidy room, and know that Dorla must in a few moments, more or less, come out from that door. When she did, she seemed in a sort of maze at seeing him.

"The doctor told me to wait, he might want something," said Felix, apologetically. "But now, I suppose he will not need me."

"Don't go—till he comes back."

"I will not, surely," returned Felix earnestly.

Then Marie, who stood in the doorway, said in a low voice, Monsieur had not had his breakfast, nor for the matter of that, had any of them. This recalled Dorla to her senses, and to the cold knowledge that she alone was suffering, and that other people could think of what they had to eat.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "I hope you will go at once; I do not know how I could have forgotten."

"I do not want my breakfast and had not thought of it," said Felix, almost angrily. "Send the woman down, for I suppose that is the secret of her care for me."

At that moment a slight sound, perhaps a moan, came from the inner room, where the child lay in the stupor of her fever, and in an instant Dorla had vanished. After that, all was silence, but Dorla did not come back. At length Felix told the woman to go down to her breakfast. She went with lively interest, and in a glow of gratitude brought him up a cup of coffee and a roll, before she ate her own. These he ate with a relish, but with a little shame that he could do so, while poor Dorla was in such misery. He was afraid she would come out while the coffee cup was at his lips. It was, altogether, an absurd position. He was afraid, at the same time, that some of the party from the hotel would arrive abruptly. He also thought the people of the house might think it odd that he was there. All these incongruities and their little goads, struck him as so abominable, in view of the suffering of the poor young mother. He knew he was outside of that, could not enter into it by one step. He wondered if that other man, who had entangled his fate in some way with hers, could go any farther; if he really could feel any interest in the child for herself. At that moment Felix would have been very glad to have



been fond of Missy, even a very little fond of her. When his roll and coffee were disposed of, he put the cup and plate out of sight; and feeling so much refreshed, began to wonder if it would be possible to induce Dorla to eat something. But she did not come out into the parlor again. All was very still; he could hear the quick breathing of the sick child, but that was all. Bye and bye Marie came back; but she shook her head when he spoke of getting her mistress some breakfast.

"Monsieur does not know Madame Rothermel. She is ready to give up her life if the little one has a pulse too many. She never eats, she never sleeps. She will die because of her some day."

Marie walked about the rooms softly, and at last got her phlegmatic sewing, and sat down at a window. Felix made himself as comfortable as he could at another, and read one of Dorla's pious little books. He was outside of this part of her life too; no wonder that she did not care for him. He could have found it in his heart to wish that he were pious, even a very little pious, at that moment.

Presently the doctor came back, a little within the hour. Then he caught another sight of Dorla, stony calm, as she came to meet him at the door. When the doctor came out from the bedroom he looked a little disturbed. He told Felix that the child was pretty sick; the remedies didn't seem to take effect. He would have to wait another week or two and watch the effect of the one he had just given. He didn't like the look of two or three things about her.

"I haven't said this to your wife," remarked the Doctor, "for women are so easily alarmed."

Felix rather angrily explained that he was not the husband of the lady, that he was simply a member of a travelling party, the rest of whom were at the hotel, and that he was only waiting there to see if he could be of use till some of the ladies came around.

"O," said the Doctor, rather put aback. Then he gath-

ered himself up professionally, and went on to talk of Missy's state and prospects. "I don't mind telling you," he said, "I don't altogether like her symptoms. It has been a bad season for children. I haven't had so much bad luck in years."

At this moment Dorla, stony calm, came walking out of the bed-room, having left Marie by the unconscious little sufferer. She went towards the Doctor and said, "I want to know just how it is with the child. You need not deceive me; is she very ill?"

The Doctor, misled by her calmness, said uneasily, "Well, yes, I am afraid she is; but we've only got to wait and watch her for a while."

Then Dorla gave him a wild, appealing look. She had not expected to have her fears confirmed, for she had told herself it was only her foolish over-fear, and that if she asked the Doctor he would reassure her. "I will do all I can," he said, looking away, for man-like he hated to see a woman's agitation.

"You are not going," said Dorla, trying to command her voice, for the Doctor was getting hold of his hat and stick.

"Only around to the hotel to see a patient; I will be back in twenty minutes," returned the Doctor, who was most fervent to get away before there was a scene. He would have suffered less in taking a child's leg off than in witnessing a woman's tears. For the child could have ether and the woman could not; one could be treated professionally, and the other could not. He got out of the door very quickly, hoping the storm would expend itself while he was away.

Dorla walked to the window and stood gazing out; but she did not see the hot, narrow street, nor the wide-open casements of the houses over the way. Then she turned suddenly and said, "What have I done that she should be taken from me?" There was no intermediate condition; she never hoped where she had any excuse for despairing.

Missy was going to die; the heavy certainty had settled on her heart. "It is of no use to talk to me of trust," she said, seeing Felix was about to speak. "It is of no use. I do trust that I shall be able to live through whatever comes. But why should I trust that Missy will be spared to me when better women have their children taken from them. God is good. But it is hard to suffer."

"I don't see," said Felix, "why you let yourself think about the chance of losing her. There are many chances that she may recover. You are only weakening yourself by letting in this imagination. She is always in danger; everybody is. You might as well any day give yourself up to the fancy that she would die before night. Just make up your mind that she is to get well. It will not alter matters for her, and it will save you pain."

These words of wisdom fell rather coldly on poor Dorla's ears, but they had their effect in somewhat suppressing if not quieting her emotion.

Another moment there were voices heard in the hall. Mrs. Bishop and Henry, who had met the Doctor in the street, and had heard from the servant at the door a terrible account of Missy, came hurrying towards the room.

"O," said Dorla, "if they only wouldn't come!"

But before she had said it, they had come.

"What is this, my dear," cried Mrs. Bishop, throwing her arms around her. "Why have you not sent for me?"

"Nobody could do me any good," she said almost sullenly, as she submitted to the embrace.

"My dear! But we could have been sorry for you, at least."

"Yes," said Dorla, turning away. "I suppose so." Then catching sight of Henry, who had not spoken, but who stood with honest grief upon his face, she suddenly broke down; and stretching out her hand to him, said brokenly, "I believe *you* would care if she did not get well. My poor little Missy! O, how can I live through this?"

Henry caught her hand and led her to the sofa. Felix could not hear what he said, but it was evidently more acceptable to her than his wise words had been.

"Wisdom, to cure a broken heart,  
Must not be wisdom preached."

Henry had sympathy where he had only pity. Mrs. Bishop and he had not loved poor little Missy, and they both felt conscious of the shortcoming. But Dorla and Henry were not aware of their confusion. They could only think of one thing. In a few moments, Henry followed Dorla to the door of Missy's room; and, horror to behold, followed her, after a moment's pause, into the room and out of sight. Felix walked about and looked out of the window. He knew he ought to go away, but he was enraged to think of Henry left in charge. Mrs. Bishop took off her shawl and gloves and settled herself in an easy-chair as if she meant to be permanent.

"This is a sad business," she said to Felix, with a sigh. "There is no knowing how long we may have to stay, even if she should get better."

"I trust there is no question about that," returned Felix, with the chilling superiority of a man of sense. Mrs. Bishop at once felt ashamed of herself, and began to wonder whether Missy were really very ill.

"But the Doctor," she went on humbly. "The Doctor seemed to think it was pretty serious."

Felix shrugged his shoulders.

At this moment Henry came out of the room, with a face of great anxiety. "She is very ill, I am afraid," he said, going up to his aunt.

"Dear, dear, Henry, this is a dreadful piece of work. I wish we had gone home a week ago."

"It is time the Doctor came, I should think," said Henry, looking at his watch. "Aunt Hester, if there is anything you want from the hotel, Marie can go round and

get it. I of course shall stay; and you will have to be here all the time."

"Dear me. Yes, of course. But this upsets one so. There are my pills to take at twelve. And I did not bring a cap; and my slippers—and the tonic—and my glasses—and that little breakfast-shawl, if I have to sit by a window—"

"I should think Marie could get them all," said Henry, anxiously, "if you told her just what it was you wanted."

"Ah, my dear Henry, I would not send Marie to my trunk. I never felt confidence in that woman."

"Perhaps Mrs. Rothermel can lend you the things."

"Her slippers would not fit me."

"No, of course they wouldn't."

"And I am suffering torments already with this boot."

At this moment Dorla came out, her eyes red with crying. "Hasn't he come yet?" she said. That meant the Doctor.

"No," said Henry, looking at his watch, which was still in his hand.

"My dear," said Mrs. Bishop, "I am going to stay with you of course, and I was just arranging with Henry. Now don't you think you could go to another room, and rest a little while, and let me sit by Missy; you look so very tired."

"No! oh, no!" cried Dorla, as she started backward to the door. "I don't want to rest. And I am sure you needn't stay."

"Of course I shall," said Mrs. Bishop, with great firmness. "I shall not leave you while she is so sick. And I am talking of sending Marie around to get some things."

"Yes?" said Dorla, wearily, retreating to the door.

"I wish I could avoid it though. I suppose you haven't such a thing as a light worsted shawl?"

"I don't know," said Dorla, looking distressed. "Marie will see."

"And the slippers, *of course* you haven't any that would do. I really am afraid I shall have to send Marie for the slippers, if for nothing else. These walking-boots are so uncomfortable. I suppose it is the warm weather."

"Dear Mrs. Bishop, don't stay; really I do not need anything. Henry will be here, and that is really all I need."

At this moment the doctor entered, and Felix took occasion to withdraw, washing his hands of the whole business. It was the very last chapter of his interference and his hopes. If the child died, she would marry Henry from gratitude; if she lived, she would marry him from duty. A woman that had set her heart upon sacrificing herself, might as well be let alone; there was not any hope of turning her.

For the next two days there was a great doubt about poor Missy. Mrs. Bishop never got away for a moment, and Marie and Mrs. Glover had to be trusted to get the tonic, and the slippers, and many additional details of comfort. Henry was not seen at the hotel, and Abby with amiable merriment wondered if he carried up Mrs. Rothermel's meals to her and fed her with a spoon. But while a woman's child is lying in danger of death she is not apt to give much thought to meals and spoons as connected with herself, nor to the appearances of things in the eyes of the world. That Mrs. Bishop was there, in her heavy imbecility, for the purpose of making it proper that Henry should be in the chamber of anguish beside the unconscious sufferer, never entered Dorla's brain. There was no room for that. The doctor was there many times a day. The people in the house were very kind. The weather was unbearably hot. Mrs. Glover came often, but rarely saw Dorla, and Abby, if she had not had the companionship of Felix and a party of friends recently arrived, would have been much bored.

"How is the little thing?" she would say to her mother as she came in from a drive and drew off her gloves sitting down to lunch. And Felix could not forgive her that she

sometimes spoke to the waiter about the cold chicken before she heard her mother's answer. What a good appetite she had. How merry her laugh was. And how handsome she looked. Felix wondered whether she would ever bend over a little child in a fever and forget cold chicken and locketts and round hats and the opinion of the world.

But after two days of this suspense, Missy suddenly rallied, and without explanation began to get well. The doctor could not account for it; it was probably one of those unheralded attacks of fever to which many children are subject while they are "among the teeth," as the Scotch say. It was very possible that she had not been in as great danger as she appeared. Every one, a little out of temper, began to be peevish about the fright she had given them. Mrs. Bishop came back to the hotel, slippers and all, and felt that she had been wronged. Felix felt that Abby had been the wisest of them not to let anything interfere with the cold chicken. Mrs. Glover sneered at the doctor, and did not believe she should have been deceived a moment if she had been admitted to the child. Even Henry came back, looking worn out and indifferent, and went to his room and slept hours on the stretch. Only Missy's mother did not blame her for the unnecessary expenditure of emotion incurred by her illness and recovery. She felt indeed bruised and wounded, as if she had been cast up on the hard shore of every-day, after a desperate storm that had been beyond her strength; she could have the joy of reason not the joy of feeling, after such a struggle.

Missy was troublesome as a convalescent. But then she was troublesome in all estates and conditions. Her exactions alone would have prevented those about her from feeling unalloyed happiness in the sight of her recovery. Marie made no secret of her feelings and gave warning publicly. "As soon as we reach home, Madame will please look out another maid for Missy." This is such pleasant news to hear, two or three hundred miles from home, and with a sick

child upon your hands. A servant of course, under these circumstances, feels that she has discharged her conscience when she has said this, and seeks no more to please or mollify. Though it was the best thing that had happened to Missy for a long time, to get rid of Marie, Dorla took it quite to heart. She had a great dread of strange faces about her, and would have endured the dull-eyed Marie to the end of time rather than have made the change.

A week after Missy's illness, Dorla was so dejected that she had to remind herself what she had escaped, in order to be thankful. On the day before, Missy had driven out; she was unmistakably as well as she ever had been. This morning, she was to be taken to sit for an hour or two in the Governor's Garden across the way, when a hasty summons came from Mrs. Bishop. Dorla, establishing her with Marie, in the Garden, went hurriedly around to the hotel. In her own room, she found Mrs. Bishop in much agitation; a despatch had just been received, which Henry was even now answering, communicating the news of the severe illness of Henry's mother, the sister of Mrs. Bishop. They were to start in the train at one o'clock. Dorla surely would go with them? There was but one answer to that, but it took a long while to convince Mrs. Bishop that it must be. Missy could not take such a journey. Dorla was down on her knees packing Mrs. Bishop's trunk while she said this. The poor old lady was quite unnerved.

"I am sure there is no time to lose," said Dorla, folding up a wrapper.

"Henry said we must not waste time," she said. "Poor Henry! Dorla, I think you ought to go."

"I wish it were possible," she returned, "for your sake. But it cannot be. Dear Mrs. Bishop, which hat shall you put on?"

"The black straw. I may need my crape one fresh. Oh, dear! But when shall you come home yourself? and how will you get home alone?"



"O, I shall manage some way. The others—are all going, I suppose?"

"Yes, I believe so. It was all quite hurried—but I think the Glovers are very tired of Quebec. And I think Felix only wanted an excuse to get away. He and Abby are out now, paying some bills and getting some things they had ordered, and Mrs. Glover is busy packing. Lunch at twelve, you know. And dear me, it is now nearly half-past eleven!"

At quarter before twelve the trunk was packed, the shawls strapped, and while Mrs. Bishop sat down by the window and fanned herself and cried softly, Henry entered the room, looking pale and harassed. He showed surprise at seeing Dorla.

"I have been in Mt. Carmel Street and through the Garden, looking for you," he said.

Then Mrs. Bishop upbraided him for this waste of time, and asked him if he had sent the telegram and paid the bill and engaged the omnibus and ordered the lunch. The worm turned at this, and said that was his business, if she would only attend to her part. Thus grief affects the most amiable minds. Mrs. Bishop cried more at this, and said she felt a presentiment she should never live through this dreadful journey. She even spoke reproachfully of Missy's illness, which alone had kept them from going home a week ago. She was as unreasonable as a woman of any age can be.

"We are wasting time. You are positive you cannot go?" said Henry to Dorla.

He had no hope that she could, but he gave her a very appealing look as he spoke. The worst of poor Henry was, he was so genuine. He looked all he felt: a mother dying, a sweetheart to be left behind. His face expressed those facts.

There came a knock at the door. "Trunks ready?" Another, with the bill. Another, with a telegram. The next fifteen minutes were a turmoil. At twelve, Dorla took Mrs. Bishop down to lunch, Henry being absent on some of

the endless business of preparation. Soon the Glovers came in, and then Felix, not in any hurry, and then Henry, white and in a hurry too. Poor fellow, he could not eat anything. Felix said it was rather early for lunch, but ate some soup. Abby, who was in high spirits, called for her favorite cold chicken.

"You have concluded not to go," said Felix to Dorla, who sat watching Mrs. Bishop's efforts at a meal.

"O yes."

"And how is the little girl?"

"A great deal better, thank you."

"Well," said Abby, "I hope you will pay us the compliment of missing us."

"Abby," cried her mother, with a sudden misgiving, known only to women on a journey; "did you lock the canvas-covered trunk?"

"O, what a shock you gave me! Yes, of course I locked it. Here's the key."

"There! There!" cried Mrs. Glover, "those photographs at the shop opposite. I knew there was something that I had forgotten."

"Let me go for them," said Dorla, getting up, "while you all get your lunch."

There was a hubbub and a discussion about permitting her to go; and then a *catalogue raisonné* of the photographs; and then Dorla got away. In a moment Henry arose, saying he must see about the omnibus, and followed her. Felix shrugged his shoulders, and Abby laughed.

"It would be too bad," she said, "not to have had a chance to say good-bye. But I hope he won't forget about the omnibus." Felix, from the parlor window, a few minutes later, saw Dorla and Henry come out of the shop, silent, and both rather pale.

"Well, did you get the photographs?" said Abby, meeting them at the door. Mrs. Rothermel had the package, and told her the prices she had paid, without any appear-

ance of indecision. But poor Henry was not so self-possessed.

"When will the omnibus come around?" said Mrs. Bishop? "I will go and see about it," he answered, turning towards the door.

"That is just as I supposed," cried Abby. "He hasn't been to order it, and we shall all be left." Such a thought put Mrs. Bishop in great excitement. She insisted that Felix should go and see about the omnibus himself.

"Now I am going to bid you all good-bye," said Dorla, quickly, as soon as he went away. "I cannot do you any more good, and I have left Missy longer than I ought already. You will not be off for fifteen minutes yet." Thereupon Mrs. Bishop was agitated again, but the adieux were hurried through, and Dorla left the three ladies in the parlor and went down the stairs. At the foot of them she met Felix.

"You are going?" he said, taking off his hat and standing aside for her to pass.

"Yes," she said, "I can't be away from Missy any longer."

"Well, good-bye, then," he said, putting out his hand. "I hope Missy will continue to improve."

"Thank you! Good-bye," said Dorla, giving her hand without looking up, and in a moment half a dozen people were between her and him, and she passed out of the door into the midday heat, with a strange feeling of disenchantment. And so it was all over. And this was the end. And how hot the pavements were; and how steep the street. Missy must be wanting her gruel. And this was the end. What else had she looked for, she said; and yet it seemed miserably prosaic. It was with a feeling of impatience and of shame that she pulled the brass bell-handle at the door of her lodgings. It was so hot to stand there while the servant cleaned her last knife, or laid her last plate. Every one took his or her time in Quebec. But no one had ever been blamed for it before by Dorla. Every-

thing dragged and worried to-day. There was Missy's gruel at twelve, and her chop at two, and her nap at three, and her walk at five, and her tea at six, and at seven her going to bed. And between them all, a good deal of story-telling, and entertaining and exercising of patience. But through it all, Dorla felt a weariness that was unusual, almost a want of interest in what had been, and what she had chosen should be, her life. Missy, finally, was soothed to sleep; the room seemed warm and close to Dorla, as she stole out from it into the fresher air of the parlor. There the large windows were open, and all was very still. She walked about the room, and failed to interest herself in anything. After all, it did feel lonely to be in a strange city without a single friend. She had called them bores, sometimes, but she would really be glad to see Mrs. Bishop coming in, with her cap in her hand, and her slippers in her pocket. Independence and time to rest your brain are all very well, but there is such a thing as having too much of them. "What should I do if Missy should be ill again?" she thought. She wondered how far they were upon their journey, and she took the "Railway Guide" to the window, and studied it out in the dim light, and really hurt her eyes. Then she leaned upon the casement, and wondered how they were all sitting, and what they were all doing. Felix and Abby together, no doubt, feeding upon endless courses of caramels and grapes, pears and sandwiches, macaroons and sardines. All that was incongruous, and that was portable, it was fair to suppose, formed part of their refreshment. Abby would be laughing at every one in the cars, and Felix would look as if he did not object, and was quite willing to be entertained. Mrs. Glover would be sitting alone surrounded by the shawls and bags, and Mrs. Bishop and poor Henry would be silently watching the telegraph poles and barren, cheerless lands. "Poor Henry!" thought Dorla, with a sigh. "It is so seldom a man feels that way."

"That way" meant a good deal. After a while, she began

to think a walk would be so much better than staying in the house. But it was getting dark. The more she thought of the matter, the more she wanted to go to take a walk. Alas! There was no one to go with her.

"I shall have a headache if I do not go," she said, and having thought so much about it, the room felt very stifling. "At my age," she thought, "what difference can it make?" and throwing something about her shoulders she stole out, calling Marie to watch Missy. At the door she had to pass through a file of young Englishmen, smoking peacefully in the summer twilight. Dorla had to remind herself how old she was, not to be embarrassed. She had seen them sometimes at the table. They were tall, awkward, gentle, ungainly, like most young Englishmen. They would not have harmed a hair of her head, or thrown one impertinent glance after her, but it made her quite uncomfortable to pass out before them. She went down the street and into the Governor's Garden. It was cool and quiet there, with a faint smell from the damp shaded earth, and from the beds of common garden flowers in bloom. She walked slowly along the paths, feeling refreshed by the air. But the trees drooped rather low over her head. It was growing pretty dark, and the silence made it even more lonely. As she came out by the monument it was lighter, and she went down to the gate and leaned against the fence, and gazed over the tree tops and the river to where the lights of Point Levis were gleaming faintly out of the twilight. Presently, on the opposite side of the street, came by two young Canadian girls, with pretty faces, but dressed in Anglican taste. They were going towards Durham Terrace, to meet, no doubt, some square-shouldered military hero, for they looked expectant, shy and happy.

"The village maid steals through the shade  
Her shepherd's suit to hear;  
To beauty shy, by lattice high  
Sings high-born cavalier."

Dorla blushed when she found this verse wandering through her thoughts, accompanied by a regret at the certainty that she had no suit to hear, nor song. What reflection for a person of her age; for the mother of a family, (no matter how small a family.) She tried to shake the feeling off, and walked quickly up and down the path to change the current of her thoughts. But soon she was standing by the gate again; dreaming again and vaguely sad. No doubt, she looked pretty and graceful, for two good-looking, black-eyed Frenchmen who were passing, turned and repassed, gazing at her. It was not till they had passed her a third time that she saw them, and became aware of their impertinent looks. Then she started, and in much fright took the nearest path towards the upper end of the garden. She was certain that they were following her, though she dared not stop to listen for their steps. The garden now was very dim indeed, the path a little rough. Her feet stumbled; she nearly fell against a bench that stood beside the way. "I should not have come out," she thought, nearly crying. "Age doesn't make any difference. All my life I shall have to stay at home, since I haven't courage to stand things like these, and haven't anybody to take care of me."

There were steps behind her surely. At a turn of the path where another path intersected it, she caught sight of a dark figure coming towards her. Whether to be more afraid of this than of the two behind her, she knew not. It might be another black-eyed Frenchman like the others. She was sheer bewildered, and began to run.

"What is the matter," said this new terror, instantly beside her, notwithstanding all her running. She stopped and panted. "Has anything frightened you?"

"You!" she said, stretching out her hands in a sort of joyful confusion; for it was Felix Varian.

"Yes," said Felix. "What are you doing out so late alone?"

"I don't know. I came out for a walk; I was—lonesome, you know. I am so glad to see you."

"But what were you running for?" asked Felix.

"There were two Frenchmen," she said, looking back, "who followed me up from the gate. But they are gone."

"Let us go back and look for them," said Felix, for they had nearly reached the upper gate.

"Very well," she replied, laughing a little nervously, for she felt very safe now. So they turned, and she began to wonder how her arm got in her companion's. In the agitation of meeting him, she had probably given him both hands and he had kept one, and put it on his arm. She could not remember; it was rather irregular, but very protected and pleasant. The garden did not seem particularly dark now, but only dim and pleasant. Some lights had been lit in the street beyond, and they gleamed faintly through the foliage.

"But tell me," she said, gradually recovering herself, "how you happened to be here? I thought you were a hundred miles away."

"I met some friends at the last moment," said Felix, "who persuaded me to stay."

"Oh," said Dorla, with a little vague disappointment in her voice.

"Besides," said Felix, detecting the intonation, "I didn't like the idea of your being left quite alone in this strange place."

"I don't believe you stayed at all for that," she said.

"Then you prefer to believe that I stayed from the persuasions of my friends? If I only knew positively which you preferred, I almost think I would tell you the truth."

She did not answer, and they walked on silently a little while. Here it was lighter, and they stood beside the monument.

"I do not see your Frenchmen," said Felix.

"No," said Dorla, slipping her arm a little further out of his. "They were afraid of you and have gone away."

"I think you are not strong-minded, Mrs. Rothermel," said Felix, pulling some leaves off a bush beside him.

"I am afraid not," returned Dorla, with a sigh. She wondered what he would think if he knew what had been her thoughts as she stood there by the gate, ten minutes ago, envying the little Canadian girls going to the terrace. She did not envy them particularly now.

"Shall we go to the terrace?" he said, as if he knew what she was thinking of.

"O, no," returned Dorla. "There are so many people, and it is too late."

So they walked about the garden, talking little.

"You do not seem to care about knowing why I really stayed," said Felix, in rather a forced way—after a silence of a minute or two.

"O, I care, yes," she said, rather confused. "But people that have so many reasons—"

"But there must be one that is *the* reason."

"I don't know why. They all mix up, and if they happen to go one way, you follow."

"I particularly?"

"O, no, I, you, anybody."

"Then you think that I have no one reason that keeps me in Quebec. Now I do assure you that I have. Do you want to hear it?"

"Why, no. I—I don't know that it's necessary."

"Very well. Then I will not tell you."

"But you might tell me instead—how long you are going to stay in Quebec."

"That, oh, I should have to ask *you*. You know better than I how long I am to stay."

Dorla found assurance enough to shrug her shoulders, and look unmoved under the light of the lamp near the entrance. They turned and walked back into the garden without speaking. It was the second time to-day that Dorla had had a suit pleaded—if this were a suit. But what diverse suitors!



Perfect Adonises make love very differently from Henry Stanfields, pale and passion-mute. But was this making love at all? She did not clearly see. Perhaps it was only his insufferable arrogance once more; perhaps her eager welcome of him had inspired him with a fancy to revive her memory of the past. So gradually, very gradually, her hand slid further and further from his arm, and in a feint of gathering up her dress, freed itself at last entirely.

"They do not keep the paths in very good order in this old garden," she said, in extenuation of her fault, which she felt to be a fault as soon as it was done.

"Not very," said Felix, distantly. And they walked on in silence. When they had reached the centre of the garden again, they passed quite close to a seat, standing near the walk, under the low boughs of a tree.

"Shall we emulate the servant-maids, and sit down awhile?" said Felix.

"I am afraid it is too cold," said Dorla.

And Felix said: "Are you?" in a tone that made her very quickly sit down.

The smell of the flowers, and the softness of the air, made it absurd to talk of being cold. She had better have said too warm, though it was not that. A faint sound of city-life came to them—wheels rolling over the stony pavement, the distant striking of a bell; but so far away, it seemed to add to the stillness rather than take from it.

"It does not seem like being in a city," she said.

"No," he returned, absently.

"I think there is a fascination in the street-lamps, even, of this place, though I don't know what it is. I bought a picture of one the other day, and am studying to see what makes it more agreeable to the eye than those we see at home."

This, Dorla said, vainly trying to speak with indifference, and to find things to talk about that would seem natural. Felix would not take any notice of the street-lamps.

Then she was silenced by her own embarrassment, and nothing was attempted in the way of conversation. Bye and bye a policeman came by, and she hoped that her companion would take it as a suggestion, and would look as if he were willing to go. She said at last, as the policeman's steps died away down the path :

"Hadn't we better go? Maybe they lock up the garden."

"Maybe they do," said Felix, not moving, however.

"And we shouldn't like to be a pair of Goody-two-shoeses," exclaimed Dorla, with desperate levity, half-rising.

But as her dress had swept across the bench when they sat down, Felix's boot was on some of the flounces, and as he did not move, she had to sink back, a prisoner.

"You are on my dress, please," she said quickly, and half-frightened.

"Mrs. Rothermel," he began abruptly, not noticing what she said, "we have wasted a great deal of time already, don't you think so? Four or five years, it seems to me. And I think we ought to understand each other."

"Yes, I think we ought," she returned, hardly knowing what she said, and trembling very much.

"Sometimes I have imagined that you had nothing to say to me that would give me any pleasure; but lately I have begun to hope you have not forgotten all. I don't want to revive the past; there is a great deal that is very painful. But you know, at least, that you were very hard upon me, when you sent me away without a word, when I had come back to you the very moment that I heard that you were free. I should not be half a man if I had sought you after that. I resolved never to look upon your face again, and I do not blame myself; but fate threw me with you once more, and I cannot help the result. I prided myself on having forgotten you, but it seems I had not."

"You feigned it very well," she said unsteadily. It is undermining to show jealousy and to speak unsteadily. He caught her hand.

"I want to go," she cried, trying to free herself, and to rise.

"And I want you to stay," he said, "till you have given me my answer."

## V.

**T**HERE was a second wedding-day ; this time no white silk and orange blossoms ; no dull elderly people in the way, and no smell of fried oysters. Dorla and Felix walked down the long aisle of a silent, crowded church. (To fill it had been Harriet's business and pleasure.) There might have been ten or ten thousand people, it would have been the same to Dorla ; she walked beside the man she loved through this gay crowd, as she would have walked through a forest, or through a flowering garden. There was a dreamy look on her face ; she plainly was not occupied with the thought of how her dress hung, nor how her back hair would look from the chancel steps. She even forgot to hold her bouquet in a tight grasp against her waist, but walked past the attentive spectators, with the unfortunate flowers trailing against her dress, as they hung in her hand. She wore pearl-color, and her dress was beautiful.

"She looks youngish for a person of her age," said Abby to a cavalier beside her, who was gaping after the beautiful apparition on her way to the foot of the altar.

Abby had not dared to speak while they passed her, but now, under cover of the prayers, she talked incessantly. She hated the prayers, and meant to laugh at everything ; she no longer looked as if the world lay before her, but as if she had passed through one very dreary and hateful part of it, and as if she were resolved to gain a reckless enjoyment from the present. She looked years older than she was, and much like other women now, for prettiness. The charm of freshness was quite gone. During the benediction, she talked in a stage whisper about the bride's bonnet ; but

when they passed down the aisle beside her, she drew her breath quick; that Quebec experience had gone deep. There walked the man to whom in his perfect beauty she had given her heart; and in a certain way, a woman has but one heart to give. She did not love him now; but she could never be the same again, for having loved him.

When the newly married people had passed out of the church, the assembly relaxed its attention, and broke up in babble and confusion. Miss Greyson, in a waterproof suit and felt hat, was joined by Mr. Oliver, well preserved, and unimpaired by time or by emotion. Miss Greyson's father had failed, and she had been permitted to teach school, and to attend medical lectures, and to do every strong-minded thing that her soul delighted in. She held Dorla in great contempt.

"Well, Mr. Oliver," she said, "you see what it is to be constant."

"Yes, Miss Greyson," he returned. "It has been the error of my life to take the first answer."

And so on, pages of old-bachelory talk. He felt sure Miss Greyson did not know that he had once offered himself to Dorla; indeed he could hardly believe it now himself. It was quite safe to talk to Miss Greyson in this way. He had talked so forty times, indeed he always talked so, and no one would suspect where the truth lay.

Mr. Davis, who had been married several years, and whose wife was dowdy, made his way over to them, and said with a sigh: "Ah, Miss Greyson, it doesn't seem like six years since that morning in the Conneshaug! Who would have thought it? But Mrs. Rothermel, I beg her pardon, Mrs. Varian, doesn't look a day older than she did then."

This was not pleasant to Miss Greyson in her felt hat, who knew that lectures and teaching, blissful as they were, did not tend to youthful looks.

"Nor a day wiser," said she with contempt.

"I don't know about that," said Davis. "I think marry-

ing Varian is a step beyond marrying Rothermel in point of wisdom."

Then the dowdy beckoned him away to look up the carriage. She was always recalling him, and that he did not get very far away, was owing as much to her assiduity as to his want of ingenuity.

Mrs. Bishop was crying a good deal, and got out of a side door with the help of a nephew (not Henry). Poor Henry was now in South America trying to learn the ways of a great mercantile house, and saving up beetles and butterflies for Missy; working with one part of his brain, and dreaming with the other. He could not get over the habit of loving his love with a C. Mrs. Bishop had not more than half forgiven Dorla, but it was very necessary to her to have some friends who were not weary of her age, and who would fill up the many empty hours of her days, and Dorla was the most conscientious friend she had, and so she had to be forgiven, wholly or in part. Felix was quite resolved this sort of thing should not go on, after he had power to stop it. "This sort of thing," was a daily visit of Mrs. Rothermel to Mrs. Bishop, and endless arrangements for her comfort or pleasure. It was naturally not all that a lover could ask, to have the drive in the park daily spoiled by the addition of a cross child or a querulous old lady. But a man who marries a conscientious woman must make up his mind to this sort of thing, till he has power to put a stop to it.

Possibly he felt as if the time had come to put a stop to one nuisance at least, when, an hour after the benediction had been said over Dorla's head and his, he stood in the hall waiting for her to come from her room, where he knew she was saying good-bye to Missy. The carriage was at the door; the trunks had long been sent away; Dorla in her travelling dress at last came down the stairs. There had been a tempest, he knew. But all was silent now, and Dorla was very pale. She had just reached the foot of the stairs, and Felix was saying with a smile, "Do people ever get left on

their wedding journeys?" when there was a rush of pursuer and pursued, and Missy, with a white face, slid down the stairs like a spirit, and flung herself upon her mother with a cry.

"Mamma! Mamma!"

"Missy, you will kill me!" cried poor Dorla, putting her hands up to her face.

Missy got her tiny, fierce fingers clutched in her mother's dress; she was like a little maniac; all attempts to take her away without positive violence, were unavailing. It was pitiful to see her. Her wedding finery had not been taken off. She was white to her fingers' ends. Her short, pale hair stood out in a frizz about her poor, passionate little face; her light eyes were full of an expression of violent emotion, strange on such baby features. The servants who had come into the hall to see their mistress' departure, stood around in perplexity and dismay. The nurse coaxed, wrestled, was despairing.

At last Felix, opening the hall door, said, "We shall be late," and stepped outside.

Dorla said hoarsely, "Missy, I must go; good-by," and stooping down, with her own hands attempted to release herself from the child's grasp, and made a movement towards the open door.

Then poor little Missy, with a great cry, sprang before her, and flung herself upon the ground across the threshold of the door.

"For shame, Missy, get up, for shame!" cried the nurse, stooping to interfere. Dorla bent down and tried to lift her up; but she clutched the sill of the door with all her strength, and screaming and sobbing, lay face down, a barrier between her mother and the outer world. Felix standing outside with lips compressed, looked on a moment silently.

"Dorla," he said, at last, and put out his hand.

She took it, and stepping over Missy as she lay, followed him down the steps and into the carriage without a look

behind. The servants picked up the little figure and hustled her off into the house, before the carriage door shut after Felix.

But what a beginning for a wedding journey! For two minutes Dorla tried to command herself, but then she either stopped trying, or it was no use, and she burst into tears.

"Felix," she said, "be good to me this once; I never will be so weak again; just let me go back. It will kill the child. I know she will be ill to-night. All alone with servants—and they do not love her—think of it, Felix. How can I go away and leave her?"

Then Felix's face grew very cold, and he did not take the hand that she put out to him.

"You are not angry," she said, frightened.

"Yes, I am afraid I am," he answered, gravely. Then she turned away her face, and tried to stop her tears. This made him feel sorry for her, and he said:

"We cannot go back, you must see that is impossible. But we need not stay very long away, nor go far off from the city. You shall have a telegram every hour while we are away, if that will comfort you."

"You must think me so unreasonable," said Dorla, in her tears.

"Well, I can't deny I do," he returned.

"But Felix," she said, timidly, "it *would* comfort me to have a telegram to-night, to know whether they have got her pacified, if you won't be very much ashamed of me."

So Felix called to the coachman, and stopped at an office, and had arrangements made by which a telegram should reach them by the hour of nine; and it is to be presumed he felt wrathful and mortified to have to give the order. But when he went back to the carriage, he found Dorla looking relieved. It had taken a great load off her heart to know that she should hear again from Missy that night; the separation would not seem so monstrous, she would yet watch over her going to sleep, as she had never failed to do.



"It's a bad beginning," he said, trying to smile as he shut the carriage door, "but I have sent a telegram at the same time, countermanding my orders to Philadelphia. We will just go over to— and maybe we can get some decent rooms, and maybe we can't. But you'll have the happiness of knowing that you can get to Missy in an hour, if she does not enjoy her bread and milk without you."

"Felix!" cried Dorla, reddening with shame, while at the same time a weight was lifted from her heart. "You are better to me than I deserve. You must think me so unreasonable; but I can't tell you how cruel it seemed to me to be going away, and leaving poor Missy there crying in her jealousy and misery."

"She has often cried so before, and it hasn't killed her."

"Ah, yes! but, Felix, it wasn't the same thing; you know I wasn't going away from her. She realized it all."

"She realized that she had a little extra work to do, and she did it. You see she conquered."

"I don't call it conquering," said Dorla, crying a little at the thought, "to have me walk over her and go away with you. Ah, dear! It was like S. Jane Frances de Chantal and her boy."

"What was S. Jane Frances de Chantal going to do?" said Felix, relenting, with a little caress. "Had she been getting married?"

"O, no," exclaimed Dorla, with a faint shudder.

"I suppose saints don't do that?"

"She was going away—to found an order of nuns. Ah! it was very different from me."

"Yes, I should hope it was," said Felix, cynically. "I may be a terrible fate, but I hope I'm not as bad as bread and water, and stone floors, and hard beds, and a nagging lot of women."

"Ah, Felix! You do not understand."

"Then you really wish you were on your way now to found an order of nuns?"

"I didn't say that."

"What did you say then?"

"I said you didn't understand."

"Maybe I don't. But it is too late now for you to change your mind. You must make the best you can of what you've done, and try to be contented."

"Ah! I am afraid it will be only too easy!" said Dorla, with another sigh.

"Well," said Felix, "you may add again, that I do not understand. For I'm sure I don't."

"This you may understand, at least," said Dorla, "that I am not fit to be a nun, or I suppose I should have been one. I am a failure, don't you see, Felix. I've spoiled Missy. I've never been able to make a good housekeeper. I am afraid I never helped poor Harry any. I don't know that I was ever any comfort to mamma. And I wasn't—I—And perhaps, I shall not make you happy after all. I can't see what I was created for."

"I can't either, except to make people want to possess you. To have and to hold you," he said, with a fierce sort of satisfaction.

"But—" said Dorla.

"But—" said Felix, kissing her.

And then she forgot all about S. Jane Frances de Chantal, and the Order of the Visitation, and for the moment about poor Missy, too.

It is a blessing that when you are a failure, you can forget it sometimes for a while. But the fact remains the same.

THE END.

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